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in this issue

On Practice

Ireland:

The last phase of the Democratic  
Revolution; &  
The Colonial Question

Women's Liberation

### MLQ

the theoretical journal of the Communist Federation of Britain (Marxist Leninist)

The C.F.B. (M-L) is an organisation of Communists whose purpose is to help create the conditions to form a revolutionary party. The rising level of struggle against all oppression in Britain will not effectively challenge the ruling-class until the lessons of these struggles are widely understood by the working-class and its allies. A disciplined party guided by scientific socialism is needed to lead in this process of raising the struggle to a conscious political level.

No such party exists. The historical contradictions leading to the split in the international Communist movement in the early 1960's have not yet been resolved and the lessons applied to the actual conditions existing generally in Western Europe. Without this being done there will be no guiding political line and programme and no unity within the Marxist-Leninist movement.

The C.F.B. (M-L) is comprised of groups of Marxist-Leninists who have been working together since 1967 to aid in this vital task of forming a party. This process involves combining two forms of political work.

**FIRSTLY:** We study the main problems facing the British people and the world revolutionary movement, applying the scientific socialist method developed by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tsetung.

**SECONDLY:** We engage in immediate struggles on the main issues of exploitation and oppression.

We believe that only in combining the lessons of both these forms of political work can a correct line be developed. Without such a guiding line and programme the struggles on all the vital and immediate issues will continue to demonstrate the treadmill characteristics of the last 150 years.

In developing this line we recognise the need to destroy the influence of social democracy, revisionism and Trotskyism - the main defeatist ideological trends which act to disarm the working-class.

We understand that as all these tasks are increasingly achieved it will become possible to build a mass revolutionary movement capable of withstanding ruling-class attacks and finally of overthrowing and smashing the present system and its State machine. The working-class and its party will then implement its own dictatorship over the present employing class to build socialism and prevent the restoration of capitalism.

Our basic policy document is 'The Marxist-Leninist Movement in Britain; Origins and Perspectives' published in 1969. Readers wanting to know more about our policy and political work should contact their local group or the Secretary of the C.F.B.

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Signed articles in M.L.Q. do not necessarily represent the political line of the C.F.B. (M-L).

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## Editor's Note

THE COMMUNIST FEDERATION of Britain undertook the publication of *MLQ* over a year ago, fully aware of the difficulties involved in the production of a theoretical journal. We did not at that time expect that *MLQ* would achieve a large circulation quickly, and we did not intend that it should. It was to be primarily a means of formulating our theoretical position on the most important issues confronting us and we intended it to be circulated in the first place within the CFB and amongst those associated with it. From the first issue we found that there was a considerable interest in *MLQ*. Our sales have grown with each issue, and there is every indication that the trend will continue.

The CFB is a young organisation. We have increasing commitments and we are in many respects overstretched. We have limited finances and we have had to experiment with different printing processes in an attempt to produce an acceptable low-cost magazine. Our last issue was technically poor, and for this we apologise to our readers. In its production we were beset by a succession of unexpected problems. We are confident that we have now overcome most problems of this kind and we expect to maintain, and as soon as possible, improve upon the standard of this issue.

In this issue we return to the struggle in Ireland with two more articles. As has been the case with the discussion on the origins and development of revisionism, there are within the CFB differing interpretations and analyses of the Irish struggle. We see no reason to conceal this fact; indeed, we consider that only through an open polemic will we be able finally to formulate a national CFB policy on Ireland. In issue No. 4 an analysis drawing explicitly anti-nationalist conclusions and regarding Northern Ireland as *de facto* a part of Britain was presented. One of the two contributions in this issue adopts the same perspective in an examination of the colonial question. The other article, 'The Last Phase of the Democratic Revolution in Ireland', in sharp contrast, argues that Ireland is *one* nation and that the present phase of the struggle in the north is for the completion of a democratic revolution. Readers are referred to the editorial note preceding this article.

We also publish an article which takes as its inspiration the title of Mao Tse-tung's well known pamphlet *On Practice*. It is an affirmation of the Marxist, dialectical materialist position in philosophy. This article has already appeared in a considerably abbreviated version in the China Policy Study Group's paper *Broadsheet*, with whose agreement we are publishing the complete text.

The article on women, which examines a pamphlet by Selma James, emerged from extended discussions within the London CFB Womens' Caucus. We expect to publish further contributions on the same subject in forthcoming issues.

Most of the contributions that have appeared in *MLQ* reflect the continuing theoretical discussion going on in the CFB. We have neither experts with all the answers nor ready-made political lines on the problematic issues we are treating. The work of our writers is mostly the product of collective study and the objective to which they are committed is the formulation of clear Marxist positions and the formation of an all-round policy for the Federation. This we see as an indispensable part of the party-building process.

## On Practice

In this study of Mao Tse-tung's essay *On Practice* the intention is not simply to point out the theoretical contribution it makes to Marxism, but to reveal its practical core, that is, the political purposes for which it was developed, by presenting it within the revolutionary context from which it originated.

The aim of study is to guide action, to help solve the problems of revolution and to provide a framework for ideological unity. This view constitutes an implicit criticism in the first place of a tendency amongst some high-powered marxist intellectuals to study in a vacuum, treating theory as a form of class struggle in its own right, independent of practice [1]. By doing so they not only negate the practical essence of theory but alienate the masses for whom study is made a burden. This aggravates the opposite and equally erroneous tendency to stress activism at the expense of theory. Mao Tse-tung's article 'On Practice', provides a natural basis for a discussion on the correct approach to theory since, on dealing with the marxist theory of knowledge, it raises the whole question of the correct relationship between theory and practice.

### The Historical Context

'On Practice' was written in 1937 when the Chinese Red Army, having established itself at Yen-an after the Long March, and now in the United Front with the Kuomintang, was experiencing a period of respite. It thus took the opportunity of assessing the experiences of the Second Revolutionary Civil War, during which, particularly under Wang Ming's leadership from 1931-34, serious political, military, and organisational mistakes had been made. These had disrupted the internal unity of the party, upset political work and caused grave losses in battle. Although these errors had been criticised in their specific instances, they had persisted because the ideological attitudes of 'doctrinairism' and 'empiricism' which underlay them, had not been dealt with. 'On Practice' was designed precisely to liquidate these erroneous ideologies.

Wang Ming took the line of 'left' doctrinairism, starting not from a concrete analysis of China's actual revolutionary situation but from an abstract understanding of the class struggle gleaned from random study of marxist texts. He followed the principles of socialist revolution mechanically and dogmatically, failing to relate them to the specific conditions of struggle in China. In the end, he took up policies of positional warfare and urban uprisings which had nothing to do with the real situation. His abstract and dogmatic approach was masked by a smokescreen of 'leftist' clichés—a kind of sloganising which is just a show of bravado. Such behaviour is often typical of petty-bourgeois cadres who, coming from an economically unstable class, are unsure of their position and want to prove themselves to be 110% revolutionary—a symptom of what Lenin called 'the infantile disease of communism'. These cadres, desiring a change in their own status, long to race ahead to liberation and often lack the patience for carefully planned strategy or the stamina for a long drawn out struggle. Their policies are based more on their own subjective desire for revolution than on the objective potentialities for it. Accordingly, Wang Ming and his followers were convinced that China was on the brink of socialist revolution so they pushed ahead with reckless and adventurist military campaigns—blind to the real situations, they ignored their failures and glorified their occasional successes as sure proof that the enemy was in a state of total collapse. Politically, they confused the democratic with the socialist revolution and regarding capitalism as the main enemy they insisted on attacking all bourgeois elements instead of uniting with the national bourgeoisie and the rich peasants against imperialism and feudalism. Organisationally they were utterly sectarian, treating diverters from their line as deadly enemies, substituting abuse for rational discussion, so making discipline a matter of mechanical obedience. These doctrinaires were above all elitists who thought they possessed special gifts which made them born leaders of the revolution: 'they believed themselves to be infallible instead of seeking the truth from facts and swaggered and bragged while afraid of just criticism' [2].

These so-called marxist intellectuals made easy ideological captives of many in the Party's ranks whose theoretical level was rather low—'doctrinairism' exploited the 'empiricism' of those who restricted themselves to their own fragmentary experiences and failed to appreciate the importance

of theory for revolutionary practice. The empiricists respected only action, despised theory and regarded 'pure' experience as infinitely superior to studying Marxism-Leninism. But neglecting to use theory and an understanding of history in summing up the experiences of class struggle. These supposedly 'practical' men, according to Mao, 'cannot have a comprehensive view of the entire objective process (of revolution), lack clear direction and long range perspective and are complacent over occasional successes and glimpses of the truth. If such persons direct a revolution they will lead it up a blind alley'. Nevertheless, the hard core empiricists were elitist and thinking they played the central role in the revolution. They considered that they had innate qualities of perception and understanding which set their own experiences above everyone else's. Since they put a premium on direct experience, they only had faith in their own subjective impressions and opinions, completely ignoring the experience of the masses. They treated their own limited point of view of the revolution as representative of the whole and failed to realise that direct experience cannot be used as an absolute and unalterable formula for the entire situation but is always limited by conditions and reflects the situation only partially and one-sidedly. The superficial and subjective understanding of the empiricists meant that they often took accidental or temporary advances or retreats as the essence of the general trend of the whole revolution. Thus they lacked firm political orientation and their actions were unco-ordinated, unprincipled and individualistic.

To arrive at an objective understanding of revolution in its totality it must be assessed from all sides in all its aspects and conditions. Mao recognised that above all knowledge of revolution rested on the experience of the masses in all areas of struggle. 'Doctrinairism' and 'empiricism' separated the concrete practice of the Chinese Revolution from the universal nature of Marxism-Leninism. The first by isolating the universal element, theory, treating it as an absolute and imposing it on practice, and the second, by rejecting the universal element and treating practice as absolute. Mao, on the contrary, affirmed in 'On Practice' the essence of Marxism-Leninism as the unity of theory and practice, that from the investigation of particular circumstances the universal laws of revolution may be derived by summarising experiences using the analytical tools of historical and dialectical materialism. So study is used to guide action and the unity is ultimately realised by testing the theory's validity through the practice of the masses. 'On Practice' laid the ground for the development of the correct strategy of protracted warfare of a guerilla nature, determined by the conditions of the uneven development of revolution throughout China and the relative strength of the enemy. It was the correct strategy based on the experiences of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles, the foundation of a network of class alliances which held in embryo the New Democracy of the future. Party unity could then be rebuilt on the basis of an understanding of these strategies and not on blind obedience to discipline. In this way 'On Practice' dealt with the subjective one-sided and individualistic approaches of 'doctrinairism' and 'empiricism': it provides a lesson in how to think, how to come to know the world objectively, and all-sidedly, and to develop correct strategies for changing it, enabling cadres to distinguish genuine from distorted versions of Marxism-Leninism, so helping them to use their initiative in acting in an independent but principled way.

### The Philosophical Content

The basic question of all philosophy is that concerning the relationship between thinking and being [3]. On the character of this relationship between our subjective ideas and objective reality, consciousness and matter, hangs the whole explanation of knowledge and above all the explanation of our general, abstract idea or conceptual knowledge. This goes beyond the immediate individual and sensuous experience of perceptual knowledge to grasp the essence, the causal structure of nature and society.

Prior to dialectical materialism, philosophers had not examined the problem of knowledge within the context of man's social nature and his historical development. In a society divided into the masses engaged in productive toil and a leisured and privileged minority freed from such tasks, ideas appear as the result of mental labour divorced from practical activity. Philosophers, as members of the leisured minority, always took the problem of knowledge to be a theoretical issue and sought its explanation in the spontaneous activity of the mind. As a result, consciousness, the subject, appears as divorced from the world, the object, as these philosophers are from production. Thus they could never adequately explain how knowledge of the real world is possible, that is, how subject and object are inter-related. But, just as the existence of these philosophers is entirely dependent on the labour of the masses, so is knowledge on practical activity. 'The standpoint of life, of practice, should be first and fundamental in the theory of knowledge' [4]. This is the

essence of proletarian philosophy.

Practice is the socio-historical activity of man directed towards the transformation of nature in accordance with his needs. It is made up of those basic types of human activity on objective reality necessary for man's life as a social being. In the first place, man must struggle to produce from the raw materials of nature goods to satisfy his material requirements; secondly, he must carry out scientific experiments to develop his productive techniques, giving him control of natural forces to turn them to his own purposes; and thirdly, he must enter into relations with other men to organise production and the distribution of products. In these social relations men come into contact with each other not merely as individuals but as classes based on the division of labour and relations of product exchange, so that social organisation involves the class struggle. The struggle for production, scientific experiment and the class struggle constitute man's life activity, practice. It must be emphasised that practice is social and historical and not individual and immediate in character: an individual's practice is part of and is determined by the activity of the historically developed society.

Knowledge is the reflection in man's mind of the objective processes of nature and society and is gained through social practice because this alone brings man into contact with things in the world, so that he comes to learn their properties and law of development. Knowledge depends entirely on the three forms of practice: theory is no fundamental source of ideas because it involves no direct interaction between man and objective reality. Marxists describe the relationship between knowledge and practice, thinking and being, as an identity or unity of opposites. This does not mean that they exactly coincide but that they are mutually interdependent, determining each other's content. In this relation of contradiction, practice is the primary aspect because it is the beginning and the end of the process of knowing, that is, all theory is a generalisation from and directed towards the needs of practice. For example, astronomy, and with it mathematics, was developed by agricultural peoples because it was indispensable to their way of life—for example to calculate the seasons. Practice is in turn shaped and advanced by the application of knowledge. The development of theory and practice go hand in hand; production begun on a small scale, involving only limited scientific understanding of techniques and giving a restricted horizon on society, but with the all-round development of the productive forces, particularly under capitalism, scientific knowledge develops to reflect all the laws of matter in action and the proletariat, the universal class, gain a comprehensive and historical view of the laws of social development. Knowledge is thus inextricably bound up with man's social life and development and the theory of knowledge should be looked at from the practical point of view and in historical perspective.

How then does knowledge derive from practice? All knowledge begins with experience; this is the first step in the process of cognition. 'Whoever wants to know a thing has no way of doing so except by coming into contact with it, that is, by living (practising) in its environment.... If you want to know the taste of a pear you must change the pear by eating it yourself.... If you want to know the theory and methods of revolution, you must take part in revolution.' These lines have sometimes been taken as the 'message' of Mao's article. Simple and direct though they are, they have been distorted both by the 'left', who regard the words as an exhortation to revolutionaries to leave behind their books and study and plunge into the struggle, and by the Right, who seek to discredit Mao as a crude philosopher and pragmatist. However behind the word 'experience' two different lines may be concealed. Empiricists also say that all knowledge comes from experience. But what is distinctive and revolutionary about Mao's line, that is, the dialectical concept of experience, practice, is that it takes man not to be limited to the role of a passive observer, merely collecting the data of his subjective and one-sided impressions, but as playing an active part in changing reality, grasping things as objects and thus gaining an insight into their laws of development. While for the empiricist knowledge remains at the level of immediate reflection of experiences, for the dialectical materialist this stage of perceptual knowledge is only the first in the process of cognition, which must advance from the superficial understanding of phenomena to the deeper understanding of the essence of things given at the rational stage of conceptual knowledge.

In practice, when man comes into contact with things as phenomena, he sees only the separate aspects of things, their properties such as colour and external relations such as comparative size. The task of conceptual knowledge is to select, from the unsystematic collection of accumulated data, the essential elements from the merely accidental ones, so forming a body of judgements which may be tested in practice and developed into a systematic and comprehensive theory. This then provides a structure to experience, by reflecting the essence and totality of the thing under

investigation and revealing its internal laws of development and interrelations with other things. 'The perceptual and the rational are qualitatively distinct, but they are not divorced from each other; they are united on the basis of practice'. In other words, the relationship between the two is both materialist and dialectical. Firstly, conceptual knowledge is based on perceptual knowledge gained through investigation which gives various observations under various conditions. For example, from man's discovery at the very beginning of society, of how to make fire by friction, and after many centuries of experiment and of productive practice using various forms of energy, science has finally been led to the universal law of the mutual transformation of all forms of matter in motion. Secondly, conceptual knowledge reflects reality more truly and completely than perceptual knowledge because, being more generalised, it is able to reveal the structural essence of things. For example, the law of value, though rarely realised in the determination of a particular price, reflects the true nature of class society. Mao illustrates the two stages of cognition with the example of the proletariat which, at the outset of its struggle against capitalism, saw only certain of its phenomena and external relations and responded with spontaneous acts of machine-smashing and burning down factories. After many years of various kinds of economic and political struggles, synthesised by Marx and Engels into a coherent theory, the proletariat finally comes to grips with the essence of their exploitation, and with an understanding of the laws of society are able to transform it.

### 'A sharp weapon in the hands of the people'

'The Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism has two outstanding characteristics; one is its class nature: it openly avows that dialectical materialism is in the service of the proletariat. The other is its practicality: its emphasis is the dependence of theory on practice emphasises that theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice'. Marxists do not come to a standstill at the point of acknowledging the existence of objective reality; they do not merely wish to explain the world but set out to change it. However, unless they are equipped with a knowledge of the laws of change, people can only remain helpless before the world, leaving everything to Fate and submitting with docility to all that happens. Conceptual knowledge, because it does reflect the objective processes of nature and reality, is the tool of change. That is why dialectical materialism, which of all philosophies is the only one to realise that conceptual knowledge is based on perceptual knowledge, so revealing the objective and materialist core of theory, arms the people in changing the world. To simply acknowledge the existence of the real world, to admit the reality of perceptions, is not true materialism because it omits the essential point of man's interaction with his environment. While perceptual knowledge merely parallels passive experience, conceptual knowledge implies, because it is only made possible by and in turn makes possible, active involvement in changing things. The process of cognition does not end with conceptual knowledge; theory must submit to the test of truth in practice; it must be put into practice in order to be refined and further developed. 'Practice, knowledge, again practice, again knowledge'. This unity of theory and practice expresses the mutual transformation of man and objective reality in which man, determined by the material conditions of his life, is able with theory to transform reality and in so doing transform himself. The key to the process is practice, because this is the means by which transformation is accomplished, by which subject and object are united. Without an understanding of practice, philosophy has no possibility of explaining the objective content of conceptual knowledge, leaving man paralysed before the world, divorced from it so that in the end his life is inexplicable.

### Idealism and Empiricism

'Idealism and mechanical materialism (empiricism), opportunism and adventurism, are all characterised by the breach between the subjective and the objective, by the separation of knowledge from practice. Philosophy which looks at the problem of knowledge only from the standpoint of theory, failing to appreciate the correct relationship between perceptual and conceptual knowledge on the basis of practice, falls into two schools: idealism and empiricism. In both objective reality remains beyond the grasp of understanding.

The empiricists, while saying that all knowledge comes from experience, deny that knowledge is a process involving two stages, that perceptual knowledge must be deepened and systematised into conceptual knowledge and therefore they ultimately fall short of materialism. For them the

essence of things is laid bare in their appearance to our simple sensations. Thus they regard the observation of phenomena as the fundamental task of science and effectively attempt to reduce the rational into the perceptual. However, conclusions drawn on the basis of phenomena, from data based on perception alone, inevitably give rise to subjective, partial and thus superficial understanding because they give only a one-sided picture of reality. For example, a wage may appear to be a fair exchange for services rendered, but in fact the transaction contains the hidden essence of exploitation in the form of surplus labour given to the employer. Hume, the most consistent philosopher in the British Empiricist tradition, was aware of the inadequacies of the system. He pointed out that perceptions reflect phenomena singly and thus isolated from and unrelated to each other, so that there is nothing in our experience that gives any indication of necessary and universal relations between the objects of our observation. Empiricism does not show when a relation is a causal one and when it is a mere coincidence, that is, the differences of relation between the striking of a match and the match lighting, and praying for rain and it raining. It thus does not explain general laws as distinct from particular instances and undermined the basis of science by placing true judgements about objective reality on a par with subjective beliefs. Because it fails to appreciate the qualitative difference between concepts (general ideas) and percepts (sensations), and thereby reduces essence with appearance, empiricism deprives knowledge of any objective content and restricts it to subjective impressions. This amounts to scepticism, particularly since mere observation offers no means of ascertaining whether knowledge reflects reality or not. For the empiricist, in theory, matter is absorbed into consciousness; the objective is taken as directly coinciding with the subjective. Similarly, the empiricists whom Mao opposed in the 1930s in practice reduced the objective to the subjective by taking their personal impressions as universal, neglecting theory, which they assumed to be entirely absorbed in experience, and failing to take into consideration the experiences of others involved in the struggle, so that they did not understand the revolution objectively, in its totality, and were unable to appreciate the relationship between particular experiences and the general laws of revolution. In the sense that empiricism does not recognise the dialectical unity of subject and object based on practice, but merges the one with the other, it provides the basis for the ultra-leftist desire to realise in the present, regardless of the objective conditions, the ideal of the future.

In an attempt to preserve the status of science from the alarming conclusion of Hume, Kant developed his complex system of Transcendental Idealism, a system which amounts to a struggle to unite subject and object but fails. Idealists regard experience as far too transitory and unreliable to be the fundamental basis of science; on the contrary it takes the mind in its autonomous activity as the source of knowledge, the repository of inevitable truths of reason, the only suitable basis for science [5]. In other words, idealism admits only the reality of reason yet fails to appreciate that reason or conceptual knowledge is only reliable because it is based on perceptions and, quite the reverse of dialectical materialism, it regards scientific laws as the product of the mind imputed to nature. Kant, however, is not a straightforward idealist. Taking this premise of idealism as the basis of his explanation of conceptual knowledge and the empiricist premise that all knowledge comes from experience, to explain perceptual knowledge he held the elements of dialectical materialism in his hands, yet because he had no conception of practice and thus had no means of uniting the two, he lapsed into dualism—i.e. he treated consciousness and matter as fundamentally separate entities. While the structure of our minds provides the conceptual framework of our experience, it always adds a subjective colouring to it, such that we can never know the world as it really is independently of our perceiving. Thus Kant, having set out to explain how knowledge of objective reality, science, is possible, is faced with the world of the unknowable 'thing-in-itself'. Hegel, who achieved the ultimate in idealism, regarded this 'thing-in-itself' as an absurdity; "on the contrary", he declared "there is nothing we can know better", because it expresses the thing in the abstract when we have in thought stripped away all its attributes. Thus it is a pure product of thought. There is no gap, for Hegel, between subject and object because the subject creates the object, thought creates the laws of the objective world such that the structural essence of reality is entirely dependent on the structure of our minds. Though Hegel's idealism is hard to take seriously, his formulation of the dialectical interrelation between subject and object is an invaluable contribution to philosophy. Marxism has taken this element with a materialism which overcomes the scepticism of the empiricist and Kant's dualism by answering the problem of whether knowledge reflects objective reality in the following manner: "human action had solved the difficulty long before human ingenuity had invented it. From the moment we turn to our own use these objects according to the qualities we perceive in them, we put to an

infallible test the correctness or otherwise of our sense perceptions.....if we find that the object does agree with our idea of it, and does answer the purpose intended for it then that is positive proof that our perceptions of it and of its qualities, so far, agree with reality outside ourselves" [6]. In other words, practice proves the objectivity of knowledge. While in theory idealism regards conceptual knowledge as an immutable set of truths fixed in the structure of our minds, divorced from reality, in practice idealists reduce objective truths to mental ones which on the one hand are open to revision regardless of objective conditions and are on the other fixed and unchangeable, so that their thinking lags behind the development of the real situation and takes the form of Rightism.

It is worthwhile here to say a word on the charge of pragmatism levelled at Mao. Only the most superficial reading of 'On Practice' could give rise to such an impression. In its philosophical sense, pragmatism serves up the old content of empiricism in a new form. It declares that we may describe the causal structure of nature according to how we wish to explain our perceptions of it, that is, we may adapt our conceptual knowledge or invent laws to suit the needs of our immediate experience. In other words, like empiricism, it denies the objectivity of the laws of science. The position of dialectical materialism is quite the opposite: we cannot freely choose the laws of science; conceptual knowledge is determined by the way things are in the world, not by the mind. Nor in practice can Mao be said to adhere to pragmatism, for although he is an able tactician, revolutionary policy is for him always a matter of principle, and never to be twisted or sacrificed to suit temporary, individual demands.

Lenin remarked that in the sphere of philosophy revisionism goes back to Kant's dualism. By 1960, a struggle between two lines had emerged in the sphere of philosophy in China, when Yang Hsien-chen\* sought to undermine Mao Tse-tung thought by twisting the fundamental concepts of dialectical materialism. Although he declared himself to be a materialist, adhering to the principle —'being is primary, thinking is secondary', he in fact only used this Marxist terminology to mask an attack on materialism. In talking about the identity of thinking and being Yang Hsien-chen was careful to interpret this as meaning that social being and consciousness exactly coincided not that there was any relationship of contradiction which accounted for their interaction and mutual transformation. This interpretation cuts out the objective core of knowledge, opening an unbridgeable gap between consciousness and matter and severing the relationship between practice and knowledge. By conflated thinking and being he aimed to deny that the superstructure of society can come into contradiction with its economic base. From this position he, along with the rest of the reactionary world, tried to discredit Mao's line of the people's communes, which at that time, in 1961-62, were experiencing temporary economic difficulties. Yang Hsien-chen claimed that these superficial setbacks were essential proof that the line of the people's communes was totally incorrect. Policies, in this view, should immediately and totally succeed, if correct, because theory and practice are identical [7]. Furthermore, this denial in philosophy of the objective content of knowledge, making scientific laws depend on the subjective will, paved the way for revisionism. In practice they were turning a blind eye to objective reality, ignoring the scientific method of investigation to gain knowledge from the masses and so invent the law of the dying out of class struggle, of backward forces of production and advanced relations of production, which backed their policy of mechanisation before collectivisation, leading China back to the road to capitalism. Mao Tse-tung Thought on the other hand stresses the dialectical element of the phase of cognition, that theory and practice develop together. "Often correct knowledge can be arrived at only after many repetitions of the process leading from matter to consciousness and then back to matter". What accounts for the initial difficulties which the people's communes underwent was not that the policy was false, but that, due to subjective and objective limitations, it was incomplete. Theory and practice do not readily conform, and the test of the truth of a theory is not its immediate success but practice over a period in which limitations are overcome, conditions changed, and theory and practice mutually developed towards conformity. In this way, Mao stressed the need for investigation and the mass line.

Successful mobilisation of the masses against revisionism did not bring the Cultural Revolution to a conclusion: on the contrary, at this stage it reached a cross-roads, for in the struggle against revisionism an ultra-left tendency emerged, particularly amongst students, which manifested itself in a desire to outstrip the given objective conditions and realise in the present the future ideal of

\* Liu Shao-chi's 'agent' in the sphere of philosophy in China.

full communism. These 'leftists' were completely carried away by the struggle against the capitalist roaders, which they based not on an investigation of the objective conditions but on the subjective principles that 'left is better than right'. For them, Mao Tse-tung Thought became more a series of slogans than a scientific method leading to knowledge. Obsessed by their own experiences in their struggle against Rightist professors and administrators, they tended to exalt their position in the Cultural Revolution, thinking that if they lost the struggle the whole country would be taken over by the capitalist roaders. This type of 'I am the core' thinking [8] leads to arrogance, isolation from the masses and individualistic actions justified by 'leftist' rhetoric but in fact based on an utterly distorted and onesided view of the situation because it leaves out of all consideration the masses themselves. Thus, the Cultural Revolution constituted not only a struggle against idealism from the Right but also against the typically empiricist errors of placing pure action above the study of Marxism-Leninism and rating class sentiment higher than political consciousness [9].

### Conclusion

At the centre of the marxist theory of knowledge as put forward in 'On Practice' lies a two-pronged attack: on the one hand against Right opportunism and on the other against 'Left' adventurism. As a contribution to theory, 'On Practice' demonstrates the correct relationship between perceptual and conceptual knowledge. The failure to formulate this relationship had been the error of all previous philosophy. But the article provides not only a lesson for philosophers: its essence is of definite practical implication for making revolution. A revolutionary policy does not evolve out of the heads of a few clever leaders but is based on an investigation of objective conditions and integrally connected with the struggle of the masses. In thus giving first place to practice, revolutionaries must not fail to attach importance to the guiding role of theory; they must never totally immerse themselves in a single practical task and lose sight of the comprehensive and systematic view of the whole situation given by summing up the experiences of the masses. 'On Practice', while occasioned by a particular struggle, contains the universal truth about idealism and empiricism, which apply in every particular instance of Right and 'Left' opportunism.

J.C.

### References

- [1] For example, Althusser and his concept of theoretical practice as put forward in his book *For Marx*.
- [2] These remarks on Wang Ming are based on Mao's 'Resolutions on some questions in the history of our party', Vol. 4, *Collected Works*.
- [3] Engels: *Ludwig Feuerbach*
- [4] Lenin: *Materialism and Empirio Criticism*
- [5] See article in October *Broadsheet* on 'Apriorism', and also *Peking Review*, 10.1970.
- [6] Engels: *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*.
- [7] *Peking Review*, 15.1970.
- [8] For an interesting account of events in the latter part of the Cultural Revolution, see W. Hinton, *One Hundred Day War*.
- [9] *Peking Review*, 43.1972.

# The last phase of the Democratic Revolution in Ireland

The following article was completed before the publication of MLQ 4 and the writer had not read the article 'Northern Ireland: The Nature of the Struggle' which appeared in that issue. T.S.'s article argues a very different case and, needless to say, draws different conclusions. It should be made clear that it is not the policy of MLQ simply to provide a forum for political discussion. As we have said in the 'Editor's Notes' in this issue our aim is to assist in formulating a policy for the CFB on all major issues. The struggle in Ireland is one of the most critical issues facing the working class and the left in Britain today. The articles which we have published and those which we shall publish on Ireland reflect, broadly, the different lines within the CFB. We do not want to hide them. We work through principled political argument and struggle to overcome them. This is the way to achieve unity on a higher level.

The Editor

THE REPUBLICAN and Unionist movements in Ireland have reached a *new level* since the development beginning in the late sixties, the period of rising national, democratic and revolutionary movements all over the world. The northern six counties of Ireland are, according to the British constitution, a part of the British state and until recently have enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy. This annexation of a part of the Irish territory and its constitutional relationship with the British state have posed a very serious problem for revolutionaries in Britain—a traditionally imperialist country.

## Scope of the Present Article

This article endeavours to analyse the post-'68 events so as to determine what should be the attitude of the working class in general and Marxist-Leninists in particular towards the *two* movements that have traditionally developed in the state of 'Northern Ireland'. Though the events in the latter place are our *prime* concern, it is however impossible, for reasons to be seen later, to disregard the present situation and its historical development in the 'Republic of Ireland'.

Since the *main* purpose of this article is to formulate a guideline for Marxist-Leninists, it is not necessary at this stage to examine the views of non-Marxist-Leninists, e.g. several denominations of Trotskyists, the Communist Party of Great Britain and the British and Irish Communist Organisation. After a Marxist-Leninist line has been formulated we shall most certainly take up the political lines of these organisations.

## Two Methods of Analysis

In the course of attempting to analyse and understand fully the current development in Ireland, two methods have developed. One of these, increasingly dominant in the Marxist-Leninist movement (which in its infancy is ridden with subjectivism), is to begin an investigation from text-books before carefully observing the *phenomenon in action* and collecting exhaustive information or data on its nature at the same time. As an inevitable result of this, false assumptions are made in the beginning of the analysis which are later 'supported' by selective historical 'facts'. Such a 'historical approach' often produces quite hysterical results, an example of which will be examined later in this article.

In contrast to this pseudo-Marxist approach is the method of 'historical materialism' which

requires investigation of concrete phenomenon in the light of its historical development. Historical materialism is neither a Marxist fashion nor a luxury—it is a bare necessity in understanding social phenomena, as all such phenomena develop in time and space. But historical materialism is first and foremost 'materialism', rejecting idealist conceptions of matter and history which assert the primacy of ideas. Therefore every investigation of a *living phenomenon* must start with the *existing* state of that phenomenon and not with its historical past, that is to say, with 'observed data' concerning the problem.

Mao gives the principal guideline for any social investigation: "You can't solve the problem? Well, get down and investigate the *present facts and its past history*" [1] (emphasis added). To investigate the 'present facts' we can learn from the Fourth Army of the Chinese People's Liberation Army:

"Comrade Mao Tse-tung has always laid great stress on investigation, regarding social investigation as the most important task and the basis for defining policy in the work of the leadership. The work of investigation was gradually developed in the Fourth Army of the Red Army on Comrade Mao Tse-tung's initiative. He stipulated that social investigation should be a regular part of the work, and the Political Department of the Red Army prepared detailed forms covering such items as the state of the mass struggle, the condition of reactionaries, the economic life of the people and the amount of land owned by each class in the rural areas. Wherever the Red Army went it first made itself familiar with the class situation in the locality and then formulated slogans suited to the needs of the masses" [2].

All kinds of investigation, of course, cannot be carried out by direct 'social practice' as the direct investigations are limited by geographical factors. In such cases 'indirect' knowledge is to be used, but what is indirect for one is direct for others. Again, social practice *alone* is not enough but it is the necessary *beginning* to provide the necessary data which are to be analysed in their historical background.

## Role of Assumptions and Hypothesis

The analysis may start with certain assumptions and a hypothesis. The hypothesis is constructed from the data obtained from initial investigations. It is the 'initial conclusion' to be verified by the subsequent analysis. The assumptions are drawn from the existing knowledge of the phenomenon or from any other related phenomenon.

A few comrades recently carried out research on the ownership of the means of production in the six northern counties of Ireland. The purpose of this research was to see whether Northern Ireland was a part of Britain or not. The hypothesis that was constructed was that "Northern Ireland was an integral part of Britain and not a colony/neo-colony of the latter". An assumption was made: "County Durham, unequivocally known as an integral part of Britain and Northern Ireland are comparable".—So a similar research was carried out for County Durham which revealed that in both places the ownership mostly came from outside. It was therefore concluded that on the basis of comparability with Durham, "Northern Ireland is an integral part of Britain". But on what basis was the *assumption* of comparability of the two places made? On any existing knowledge of the political relationship between the two? Not at all! It is well known that County Durham has been an integral part of the British state since the latter's inception and the territory of Northern Ireland was an integral part of Ireland from ancient time till forcible union with Britain in 1801 and was kept *annexed* by the British state whilst the rest of the country seceded from the latter 50 years ago.

Let us now return to the question of collecting up-to-date information or data on the current events in Northern Ireland through 'social practice'. The role of such practice and data collected therefrom are to be fully understood before one can proceed to carry out the analysis. The hypothesis that will be constructed and the assumption that will be made use of depend on such data. Our study of the present events in Northern Ireland must start, like that of the Fourth Army, with data concerning the "state of mass struggle, the condition of reactionaries, the economic life of the people", etc., etc.

## Observed Data: Present Stage of the Republican and Unionist Movement

The 'observed data' presented here have been collected from a number of discussions and talks with both average and leading members of both communities. Other sources are the recent

Republican and Unionist publications, some of which are listed in the bibliography. Previously, there had been opportunities to discuss with a few members of the Glasgow branch of the Clann Nah Eireann in several study-circles. In addition, participation in Irish solidarity movements in Glasgow has provided some opportunities to test the 'initial conclusions'. But by no means are the present data adequate, and indeed, the 'final conclusions' (or thesis) drawn from the present analysis would require further tests through 'social practice'.

One cannot fail to observe that the present events in Northern Ireland followed the beginning of a campaign for 'civil rights' by the minority community and did not start as a sectarian battle. The struggle for democratic rights has since passed on to a full-scale battle against the British Government and its State. The highest form of political struggle, whatever its tactical appropriateness may be, has been spearheaded against the British Army. And at no time has the Anglo-Irish and Scots-Irish community been considered as the *main enemy*. In fact the leadership of the 'Official' section of the Republican movement and a large section of its followers have not in the present movement considered the other community as their enemy at all. Many amongst the former sincerely desire to unite with them, though they do not have yet the appropriate politics to begin such a development. An article in the *Teoiric*, the theoretical journal of the 'official' Sinn Fein, states:

"We realise that there are two major stumbling blocks to the reconquest of Ireland, the national liberation of Ireland to which we are committed.

Firstly, there is the concrete opposition of the Protestant masses who must either be won over to support of our revolution (*improbable in the short term*) or converted to indifference (*possible*). The second possibility will be best achieved by forcing the DEMOCRATIC ISSUE with Britain; we must not be drawn into any pointless border campaign or bombing match.

Secondly, we realise that the level of political consciousness in the 26 counties is generally low. Here again, a Northern border campaign is the last thing that will raise that level of consciousness. We must organise on the concrete social issues that face the people, concentrating on the all-important EEC issue. This must be made the basis for the anti-imperialist struggle in the South, and we should not be diverted by repression or federalism from making it so" [3].

Limited results of such a policy have already been obtained. The 'officials' are being increasingly looked upon by many ordinary, and even some leading members, of the majority community as a 'socialist force'. A private conversation with UVF leader, Bobby Spence, confirms this reading (see notes).

A section of the leadership and large majority in the rank-and-file of the 'provisional' Sinn Fein do however suffer from old Republican politics associated with sectarianism. But even amongst them there is a *growing* realisation of the futility of sectarian warfare. A recent directive by a section of the 'provisional' leadership to its cadres reads as follows:

"Republicans consider the Protestant Unionists to be Irishmen also. Tone, Orr, McCracken, Mitchell, were all Protestants. There is a place for all in the Irish Republic. The aristocracy, Brookboroughs, Clarks, etc., would lose their privileges but the Protestant workers would find a new freedom.

.....  
We do not ask the people of the North to join the 26 county state; we ask them to help in building a Democratic Socialist Republic based on the Proclamation of 1916" [4].

The above is taken from notes that were "compiled as an aid to Sinn Fein Cumainn and members". Doubtless such fine sentiments are pretty useless after the extensive use of damaging tactics by the Provisional IRA but these do indicate the *changing pattern* of the movement.

The Unionist movement, led by the Orange Order, stands *solely* for the British Crown. It is sectarian because it is *primarily* 'pro-Crown'. Its conflict with the indigenous Irish people stems from the latter's opposition to the British establishment. A recent UVF statement says:

"We take no part in sectarian killings and assassinations—indeed we deplore religious warfare. We are prepared to take into our ranks anyone who is prepared to fight Republicanism which would deprive us of our British way of life. We would die rather than accept an all-Ireland Republic" [5].

The significance of the above quote is only comparable with that of the previous Provisional Sinn Fein directive. And the "British way of life" referred to in the UVF statement is nothing but

a cry for protection of the interests of the Unionist leadership from the British Government and not necessarily from the British people. The splits that have taken place amongst the leadership of the Unionists have exposed the contradictions of the latter with the British ruling class or at least a section of it. The developments following the abolition of Stormont have exploded the myth that the entire Anglo-Irish and Scots-Irish community "consider themselves British". The County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast, referring to a recent Covenant, says:

"Ulster Loyalists were on the move. Like their fathers, they were willing to live for, fight for, and if necessary die for Northern Ireland. They were determined to keep a free Province within the United Kingdom. *Most were ready to go it alone if Britain turned away.* One thing was certain—they would not unite with such a treacherous neighbour which had not kept any of the treaties of the twenties" [6] (emphasis added).

Reflecting the contradictions between the British Big Business and the Unionist bourgeoisie, the Unionist Research Department writes:

"Taxation revenue and payments that pass between governments are only a small part of the flow of finance that takes place between Northern Ireland and Britain. There is a big volume of trade which has often been balanced in Britain's favour, this has been unreal, since a large proportion of Northern Ireland's exports are only goods in transit which will pass on to constitute favourably to Britain's trade balance with the rest of the world.

Northern Ireland is also an area of high investments, and pays enormous profit to investors who are *mainly British*.

By its high productivity and intense economic activity, Northern Ireland is a major financial and economic asset to Britain and contributes substantially to the UK's balance of trade and balance of payments" [7] (emphasis added).

Reflecting the contradictions between the Anglo-Irish/Scots-Irish working class and British big business, the *UDA News*, the journal of a regional branch of the UDA, adds:

"Mr. Heath's primary aim, as set out in the Tory manifesto of the last election, is to get Britain into the EEC. However, Britain's economic interests *extend beyond her borders. Obviously she has large investments here in Northern Ireland*, but what is not generally known, she has *even more* investments in the Republic of Ireland. Firms such as Irish Industrial Gases, owned by British Oxygen, British car assembly plants are situated in Dublin and Cork, Joseph Rank is a British firm with heavy investments in the Irish Republic, and British interests in the insurance and banking are very large in the Irish Republic.

The effect of this heavy British investment means that Mr. Heath is also committed to take Ireland into the EEC with Britain so that British Big Business interests can be protected.

British policy is motivated by a desire to protect Big Business interests. It is not concerned with the freedom and political rights of our people. After all, they have deprived us of democracy. WE CANNOT TRUST BRITISH GOVERNMENT" [8] (first emphasis added).

### The Hypothesis

From the foregoing 'observed' data, the following hypothesis may be constructed:

The events in Northern Ireland present *primarily* a conflict between the indigenous Irish people and the British Government. The conflict between the former and the Anglo-Irish/Scots-Irish community is the secondary aspect of the original conflict—its by-product. The contradictions between the latter community and the British Government are developing.

Let us now examine the hypothesis in the light of existing economy and class-structure of Northern Ireland, and British-Ireland relationship. Since Ireland was once a single political entity, we shall also examine the economy and class-structure of the Republic of Ireland.

### Economy

(The sources of data presented here are listed in the bibliography)

#### Northern Ireland

The manufacturing industry is developed only in and around Belfast, in the counties of Antrim and Down. Traditional indigenous industries are on the decline. The new 'advanced capitalism' is entirely foreign and it does not require mobilisation of productive forces throughout the economy. Between 1949 and 1969, 250 foreign firms moved into Northern Ireland, attracted by cheap rent,



free rates, 40% outright grants, training grants, and grants for initial costs. Later grants were abolished and replaced by 'allowances' and 'revised investment grants'. The profit for export are tax-free for the first ten years! *The chief characteristic feature of the industry is the existence of small firms—more than half the manufacturing firms employ less than 25 people.*

British, German and US monopoly combines dominate the manufacturing industries. There are Du Pont (US equivalent of ICI), Courtaulds, ICI, British Enkalon (a subsidiary of a Dutch monopoly) Aratz-Belting (German), Hughes Tool, Ford, Standard Telephones & Cables, Walker Manufacturing Goodyear, Michelin (French), etc. British industries control the linen industry. A list of other major concerns operating in Northern Ireland in the Republic is given in the 'Notes' at the end of the article.

Banking is integrated with the British banking system. The Northern Bank and the Belfast Banking Company have been merged into one bank called the Northern Bank Ltd., which is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Midland Bank Ltd in Britain. Branches of the Republic banks which are also dominated by British banks operate in Northern Ireland.

The insurance business is completely in the hands of British companies.

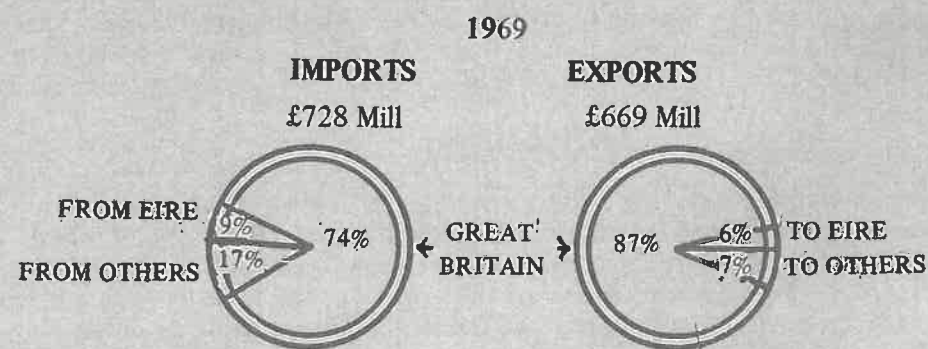
Gross fixed investment rose from £92m in the calendar year 1961 to £257.1m in 1969. £100m is pumped annually into the economy.

Structure:

	% of total gross output
Food, drink and tobacco	22
Textiles	19
Clothing	5
Engineering and shipbuilding	20
Construction, gas, electricity and water	22
Others	12

Farming is the largest single enterprise and accounts for about one quarter of the value of exports. There are 40,000 farm units, 18,000 of which are not economically viable due to small size. 9,000 of these provide farmers with their only source of income, which is often less than £500 a year.

For fiscal purposes, Great Britain and Northern Ireland form a single unit and customs entries are not required for goods passing between the two areas. However, the information from the *Ulster Year Book* for 1969 trade figures is represented in the following diagram:



Personal income *per head* in 1969-70 was £529.

### The Republic of Ireland

The manufacturing industry is proportionately far less developed than in the North. Over twice as many people are employed in agriculture and fishing as there are in manufacturing. The service sector employs 40,000 out of a total working population of one million.

300 foreign or part-foreign firms came between 1959-68. They are mainly export-oriented. Forty per cent of these are British, twenty per cent German, sixteen per cent American and five per cent Dutch. Foreign firms account for eighty per cent of all new investments in industrial enterprises.

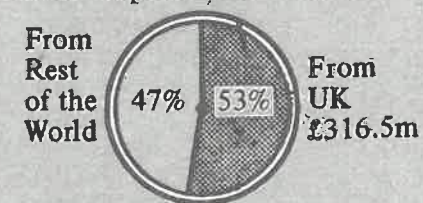
The British banks constitute the dominant force in banking. The Bank of Ireland group extends throughout the 32 counties. The banks owned by Irish interests pursue a policy in conformity with that laid down by the dominant British force.

The insurance business is mostly in the hands of the British companies. The Irish and New Ireland Assurance Companies constitute a breach in an otherwise all-British structure. They control about 15% of the total insurance market.

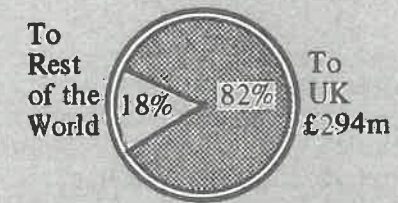
Gross fixed investment rose from £108.5m to £329m in the same period as for Northern Ireland.

Food is the only export. Coal, industrial fibres, minerals, iron and steel, fruit, vegetable, oils, wood, etc. are imported. Exports and imports are equivalent to 60% of the GNP. Eire runs a deficit of about £100m in a total trade of around £400m. Twenty per cent of the land is arable. Trade figures are represented in the following diagrams:

Total Imports 1969 £589m



Total Exports 1969: £358m



Personal income *per head* in 1970 was £460

### Banking and Insurance in the Whole of Ireland

The whole banking and insurance systems in the North and in the South are based on absolute domination and are integrated with the British systems. The leading banks control over 80% of the assets of the business. Firms controlling 8-10% of the assets of the financial systems as a whole (banking and insurance) have oriented themselves towards investment in Ireland. The remainder pursues a policy of investing its assets in British securities (in the case of banks) and British equities (in the case of British-owned insurance companies).

### Class Structure

(In the absence of any Marxist-Leninist survey data obtained from an unpublished Sinn Fein document have been used here).

#### Northern Ireland

*Bourgeoisie* (3% of the population)

1. Mainly British ascendancy, sitting on the boards of the larger firms as well as in the prime positions in the state machine. Includes a strong US-linked element (1%).
2. Ireland-based ascendancy. Shares junior control in the state machine. Includes landed gentry typified by Brooksborough and Chichester-O'Neill (2%).

*Middle and petit-bourgeoisie* (31%)

Industrial—

3. Owners of medium sized firms oriented towards the British market: Hendermans, Larmors, Bairds, Cyril Lord etc. (3%)
4. Owners of family firms—Scots-Irish and Anglo-Irish (5%)  
Indigenous Irish (3%)

Agricultural

5. Large farmers, mainly Scots-Irish and Anglo-Irish (8%)  
Small farmers mainly indigenous Irish (13%)

*Working Class* (66%)

7. Skilled workers in the developed areas. Mainly Anglo-Irish and Scots-Irish (15%)
8. Skilled workers in the declining areas, of both communities (11%)
9. Unskilled workers and part-time employed workers in the developed areas, mainly indigenous community (25%)

10. Unskilled workers and chronically unemployed in the declining areas, predominantly of indigenous community (15%)

#### Republic of Ireland (Percentages not known)

##### *Bourgeoisie*

1. Completely anglicised ascendancy, sitting on the boards of the top companies sharing with their British counterparts. Guinness, Goulding, Carroll, Goobody, Dwyer, Stanby etc. May also own large estates.

##### *Middle and petit-bourgeoisie*

2. Owners of medium sized firms
3. Owners of smaller firms mainly under family control

##### *Agricultural*

4. Farmers, majority on small holdings employing no labour outside the family. A small minority runs large farms.

##### *Working Class*

5. Skilled workers in the developed areas. An expanding group. A big proportion of these are employees of state and semi-state bodies.
6. Skilled workers in the declining areas (often self-employed or acts as small local employers—to be included as *petit-bourgeoisie*).
7. Unskilled and part-time employed in the developed areas.

(Most of the data presented here have been taken from *Marx-Engels on Ireland* and T.A. Jackson's *Ireland Her Own*).

The present stage in the Britain-Ireland relationship can be better understood historically.

The main problem that England had to face in the early days of colonisation was the continued integration of the colonisers into the Irish society. Marx [9] spoke about 'English incomers' being 'absorbed into the Irish people and catholicised'. Engels explained how this was resisted by Britain:

"The whole agrarian history of Ireland is a series of confiscations of Irish land to be handed over to English settlers. These settlers, in a very few generations, under the charm of the Celtic society, turned more Irish than the aborigines. *Then a new confiscation and new colonisation took place, and so on infinitum.*

In the 17th century, the whole of Ireland except the newly Scotchified North, was ripe for a fresh confiscation". [10] (emphasis added).

And again in his preparatory material for the *History of Ireland*—

"Within two generations, often within one, the foreigners became more Irish than the Irish, *Hiberniores ipsis Hibernis*". [11]

The series of colonisations that Engels referred to culminated in the massive 'plantation' of the Scots and English in 1609–12. Later new tactics replaced the tactics of plantation.

The democratic development of the Irish society began after the American War of Independence of 1776. The democratic ideas of the latter soon gained support of the rising middle classes which consisted of both indigenous Irish and descendants of the colonial settlers, the latter assuming the leadership. These developments led to the formation of the first democratic organisation in Ireland, the 'Society of United Irishmen' in 1791, after the French Revolution. This alarmed the British bourgeoisie and new tactics were worked out and applied. The 'Orange Order' was founded in 1795 during the height of the democratic movement. Orangeism was systematically fostered amongst the Irish descendants of the planters through economic concessions. The United Irishmen movement, *the first democratic struggle in Ireland*, was crushed in 1798, primarily due to the unpreparedness of the peasantry. Thus the process of assimilation of the settlers into the Irish society as well as the industrialisation of Ireland received a serious blow.

The next major political step to smash the democratic movement in its infancy was the Act of Union in 1801, three years after the defeat of the United Irishmen movement. Referring to the Union, Marx explained:

"During the American War of Independence the reins were loosened a little. Further concessions had to be granted during the French Revolution. Ireland rose so quickly that her people threatened to outstrip the English. The English government drove them to rebellion

and achieved the Union by bribery. The Union delivered the death blow to reviving Irish industry. On one occasion Meagher said: 'All Irish branches of industry have been destroyed. All we have been left is the making of coffins'". [12]

and again:—

"Between 1783 and 1801 every branch of Irish industry flourished. The Union, which overthrew the protective tariffs established by the Irish Parliament, destroyed all industrial life in Ireland. The bit of linen industry is no compensation whatever. The Union of 1801 had just the same effect on Irish industry as the measure for the suppression of the Irish woollen industry, etc., taken by the English Parliament under Anne, George II and others" [13].

The 1801-50 period was the period of the height of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. British policy in Ireland during this period was the beginning of the mature colonial policy of obstructing industrialisation in Ireland, the probable 'competitor', in order to make her dependent on the British market to sell agricultural products. By repealing the Corn Laws in 1846, Ireland was denied her monopoly in corn on the British market. Summing up the period, Marx wrote:

"Everytime Ireland was about to develop industrially, she was crushed and reconverted into a purely agricultural land" [14].

In this situation *the second phase* of the democratic revolution started, O'Connell's 'Catholic Emancipation Movement' of 1829. The movement went no further than the reformist 'Repeal Movement' (1843) attempting to abolish the Act of Union with British consent with the short intervention of the agrarian 'Tithe War' (1831) alongside the Repeal Movement, there grew the radical 'Young Ireland' movement demanding 'repeal or separation'. The second phase of the democratic revolution ended with the defeat of the 'Irish Confederation' uprising in 1848, which was born out of the Young Ireland movement.

Engels described O'Connell's movements as 'liberal-national opposition of the urban bourgeoisie' [15]. Alongside this he recognised a second trend which he described as the 'agrarian trend' which in fact continued until 1922. It stemmed from "the organised brigandage practiced with support of the peasants by the clan chiefs, dispossessed by the English and also by the Catholic landowners... This trend gradually developed into natural resistance of the peasants to the intruding English landlords, organised according to the localities and provinces.....it is *local, isolated*, and can never become a general form of political struggle" [16].

Beginning with the second phase of the democratic revolution until Partition, the British tactics had been one of buying off the 'liberal bourgeoisie' and crushing the agrarian struggles. By 1835 Britain had succeeded in getting the liberal bourgeoisie and middle class landowners to compromise. By 1844 the bourgeoisie, led by O'Connell, had been forced to capitulate.

The birth of Orangeism and major economic concessions like Ulster Customs, giving tenant farmers in the North the right to ownership of their holdings, kept the Irish descendants of the planters largely out of the democratic movements. A perverted ideology of the conquerors gradually developed and prevailed. Different land relations kept the two communities largely separated and by 1850 the non-antagonistic contradictions between the two communities became antagonistic. Since then the Anglo-Irish and the Scots-Irish community has opposed almost every democratic demand of the national liberation movement.

From 1846 onwards the manufacturing capitalists gained dominance over the landed oligarchy in Britain. As the world prices for agricultural products fell, agricultural productivity had to be increased. Capitalist farming based on cheap labour was thus necessary. Middlemen and small holders had to be got rid of. Cheap labour was created through large-scale evictions. In this situation, *the third phase* of the democratic movement started, with Gavan Duffy's 'Tenants Rights League' (1850) fighting for fixity of tenure, at a fair rent, with freedom of sale for tenants' improvements. The movement failed despite support from the whole of Ireland. The Civil War in the USA inspired the most important movement in this phase—the revival of the revolutionary traditions of the United Irishmen in the 'Fenian Brotherhood' (1863). It was defeated in 1867. Marx considered the Fenians as 'socialistic'. He summed up the period as follows: "The Irish question is therefore not simply a nationality question, but a question of land and existence" [17].

The British policy that began in 1846 had matured by 1870. As farm production developed, manufactures declined in Ireland. By this time she had been made 'a feeder for the English market almost exclusively' and was in that market subjected to an expanding and intensifying *world competition*.

The other most important feature of the British policy in the post-1870 period is the *advanced* application of the 'dual tactics' in exploiting the country. The tactics were developed in the 17th

In this way the Czechs, Poles, etc., formed themselves into nations in Austria; the Croats, etc., in Hungary; the Letts, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, etc., in Russia. *What had been an exception in Western Europe (Ireland) became the rule in the East. In the West, Ireland responded to its exceptional position by a national movement.* [21] (emphasis added).

The 'exceptional' national movement in Ireland was caused by the obstruction to her democratic development. Had that not been thwarted the Union probably would have produced the same result as did the union of England with Wales and Scotland.

In 1916 the question of separation of Ireland from Britain caused an uprising. Lenin explained the causes:

"And Marx, in moving his resolution of sympathy 'for the Irish Nation', 'for the Irish people' (clever L. VI would no doubt smash poor Marx for forgetting the class-struggle!) in the International, preaches the *separation* of Ireland from England, 'even should the separation finally result in a federation'. What are the theoretical premises for Marx's conclusions? In England, generally, the bourgeois revolution was finished long ago. *But in Ireland it is not finished, it is only being finished, now, half a century later, by the reforms of the English liberals*" [22] (last emphasis added).

Speaking about the 'reforms of the English liberals' Lenin was referring to the Home Rule Act whose operation was delayed until 1920. In 1916, after the Rebellion, he discussed the Irish question in connection with his polemic against the Polish Marxists who objected to the restoration of annexed territories. As the Polish Marxists tried to draw a distinction between the 'annexed territories' in Europe and the eastern 'colonies', Lenin wrote ironically:

"The English socialists should put forward the demand: 'Clear out of Africa, India and Australia', but not: 'clear out of Ireland'. What theoretical arguments can be advanced to justify such an obviously incorrect distinction?" [23].

In 1920, Lenin still considered the Irish question as a 'national and colonial question'. He wrote: ".....it is necessary that all Communist Parties render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and subject nations (for example, in Ireland, among the negroes of America, etc.) and in the colonies [24].

In 1921, Stalin [25] developing his theories on the national question for the era of imperialism described the formation of 'multi-national' (colonial) states ('Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy' etc) with the national oppression and national conflicts natural to these states.

Regarding the movement of the Anglo-Irish and Scots-Irish community, Lenin wrote:

"Now a Home Rule Bill for Ireland is passing through the House of Commons. But in the north of Ireland there is a province called Ulster, which is inhabited partly by people who originally came from England and who are Protestants, unlike the rest of the people in Ireland, who are Catholics. The English Conservatives, led by that Black Hundred landlord, that Purishkevitch.....i.e. Carson, have raised a frightful howl against Irish autonomy. That means, they say, subjecting Ulster to an alien people of an alien religion! Lord Carson threatened to rise in rebellion and organised armed gangs of Black Hundreds for this purpose." [26]

By describing Carson's actions as 'empty threat' Lenin underestimated the strength of Carson's gangs but he did not fail to recognise the *counter-revolutionary nature* of the actions of the Anglo-Irish and Scots-Irish community.

### The Thesis of this Article

History and Marxism-Leninism teach that the democratic revolution in Ireland was not completed at least until 1920. Home Rule for the whole of Ireland did not materialise. Therefore, following Lenin, the democratic revolution in Ireland is still incomplete. This is borne out by the analysis of the data from the present economy and class-structure of both parts of Ireland. Hence the thesis can now be presented as follows:

**As British neo-colonialism—the main enemy of the people of Ireland—is in an acute crisis, Ireland is witnessing a new phase, fifth in succession, in the democratic revolution. The contradiction between British neo-colonialism and the Anglo-Irish/Scots-Irish community are appearing on the surface, though not aiding the revolution at this stage. Contradictions have historically existed amongst the people—the indigenous Irish community and the Anglo-Irish and Scots-Irish community, due to the thwarted democratic development of Irish society.**

### The Way Forward—A Few Suggestions to Revolutionaries in Ireland

Detailed tactical lines for the Irish Revolution can only be worked out by the revolutionaries in Ireland. However certain suggestions will be put forward here.

Beginning from 1965 there is a major technical change in the role of Britain. The British economy as part of the acute imperialist crisis in the middle and late sixties, has suffered enormously. The electoral successes of the Republicans in the 1955 General Elections in Northern Ireland and the revival of the IRA operations in the latter period have made Britain realise that a fresh change of tactics is necessary.

In the light of Britain's decision to join the EEC, the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement in 1965 and the recent Green Paper on Northern Ireland are indicators of these new tactical changes. Since 1965 the nature of the neo-colonial exploitation has been as follows:

- a) a customs union or free trade area
- b) free movement of capital combined with monetary integration between Britain and two parts of Ireland
- c) increasing domination of American, German and other foreign capital.

Britain and Eire's entry into the EEC would make Ireland more dependent now on the European Six in addition to the present exploiter, Britain. Like the 'African 18' (associate members of the EEC!), Ireland would be 'encouraged' tariff free to export manufactured products thereby blocking further industrialisation.

The abolition of tariffs will not automatically delete the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic but would render it harmless. A new 'Union' will be achieved by abolishing separate relationships with Britain resulting in the re-integration of Britain and the whole of Ireland.

Amidst the new imperialist crisis, changing international balance of class-forces and the renewed powerful democratic struggles that are rocking Ireland at present, Britain appears to have decided to drop the age-old 'dual tactics'. Re-unification of Ireland under comprador bourgeois classes seems to be the new tactics. Thus the Green Paper warns the northern bourgeoisie:

"Whatever arrangements are made for future administration of Northern Ireland must take account of the Provinces relationship with the Republic of Ireland; and to the extent that this is done, there is an obligation upon the Republic to reciprocate. Both the economy and the security of the two areas are to some considerable extent interdependent and the same is true of both their relationships with Britain" [27].

Britain's strategy, as has been said earlier, is to exercise *political control over the whole of Ireland*. Economically the south is more important to Britain than the north, but old dualism has created a situation in which no part of Ireland can be exploited with political disregard for the other. This is recognised even by the *UDA News* —

"Britain badly wants peace in Northern Ireland and it is prepared to pay a high price for that peace because:-

- 1) If the Republic becomes involved in the conflict then British interests there will be threatened.
- 2) They want to keep in the good books of Mr. Lynch and his Fianna Fail regime. Mr. Heath knows that if Mr. Lynch is not appeased Ireland may not join the Common Market, and this would be a threat to British interests in the South" [28].

In the new situation, a divided Ireland is too risky. The EEC has come in the nick of time. The tactic of 'divide and rule' is now to be replaced by 'unite and rule', also in so doing, Imperialism will be digging its own grave much faster than it has done hitherto!

Any struggle therefore that is *centred* on the border issue is misleading since elimination of the border by the imperialists in an opportune situation would appear to the people as realising their objective. Strategically, the divisions amongst the people are to be defied, tactically these are to be seriously taken into consideration. Doubtless total integration of the two communities will only come about when the cause of its separation, i.e. imperialism, has been eliminated. But the process must start *now* by attempting to fight for further democratisation of the two parts of Ireland.

The cracks in the ideological cement between the Anglo-Irish and Scots-Irish community have created a favourable situation for revolutionaries. Further progress in this direction can be made by initiating struggles in the Republic as these will eradicate the sectarian image of the present struggles from the minds of the other community. Doubtless, revolution cannot be made to order but to the extent that the puppet government in the south has exposed itself, it is an advance for

# Ireland and the Colonial Question

IT IS CLEAR that there are two different state organisations in the island of Ireland—the Irish Republic and the UK. It is also clear that these two state organisations do not have a unified economy. (There is not even a unified market which would be a prerequisite for a unified economy (Table One-A). To that extent it is impossible to consider Ireland as a whole when analysing the colonial question.

In this article I will be considering mainly Northern Ireland. There are two main reasons for this:

1) The urgency of the situation in the North demands that Communists have the clearest possible understanding of what is happening there. Although it would be mechanical to claim that events in Southern Ireland *have no effect* on the North (and vice versa), nevertheless from the point of view of our analysis, the very real differences in state and economic structure make it impossible to consider Ireland as a single entity. In addition, despite the subjective desires of many people, there are no signs that the events in the North are having any significant effect on the situation in the Republic.

2) Many groups on the left assert that Northern Ireland is a colony (1), and by implication that the struggle in Northern Ireland is, or should be, an anti-Imperialist struggle for self-determination (2). Thus the question is not merely of academic importance. It is of the utmost theoretical and practical significance for the development of the struggle in Northern Ireland, and to a large extent determines whether that struggle should be a *national* struggle against British Imperialism, or a *class* struggle against the British ruling class.

No analysis has been made showing *how* Northern Ireland can be characterised as a colony. It may be that this position is the logical extension to the theory that 'Ireland' is one nation. Certainly, if Northern Ireland were a colony it would be a strong argument in favour of the One Nation theory. However the argument tends to be circular: if Northern Ireland is a colony then this must be demonstrated with other arguments than the 'fact' that Ireland is one nation.

## WHAT IS A COLONY?

Much of the confusion on this subject is doubtless due to the fact that there is no clear Marxist definition of what is meant by a colony. However a useful characterisation of a colony is given in the C.P.G.B. pamphlet, *The Colonial Question* (3). This should form a good basis for discussion, the following general conditions are said to be found in colonial countries:

- The development of productive forces is at a low level, and agrarian and mineral products are most important.
- There are survivals of social and economic relations belonging to pre-capitalist systems (tribal and feudal).
- The state machine within the country is controlled by a foreign power.

In essence this means that the colonial/Imperialist power uses its control of the State machine, in alliance with the pre-capitalist (largely feudal) forces, to *impede* the development of Capitalism in the colony, and to exploit it, primarily as a source of raw materials. This is the situation which Mao describes in China in *On New Democracy*. It is clear that, whatever might have been the case in the 18th and 19th centuries, such a situation does not exist in either North or Southern Ireland. The development of productive forces is *not* at a low level; there are no significant survivals of pre-capitalist social and economic systems. It is these factors which determine not only our theoretical analysis, but in practical terms whether or not the class forces are such as to permit the mass mobilisation of an anti-Imperialist struggle.

## SOUTHERN IRELAND

Although our major concern should be with the North, it is probably valuable to analyse briefly the situation of the South. In general the productive forces are not at such a low level that we

could characterise S. Ireland as *colonial* in status. Industry occupies the central place in the economy—both in terms of contribution to the G.N.P., and in numbers employed. Southern Ireland also has a formally independent state organisation [Tables 1B, 3, 4]. However it is also true that there is considerable imperialist penetration of the S. Irish economy (not only British, but also American, German and Dutch); there is also a relatively backward class structure, particularly in the agricultural sector. In this respect Southern Ireland does have some of the characteristics of a *neo-colony*. To that extent anti-Imperialism is one factor in the struggle of the Irish people. It would however be incorrect to assume a direct parallel between this struggle and the anti-imperialist, liberation struggles of the under-developed countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Quite apart from the relatively high level of capitalist development in Southern Ireland, it is also significant that no section of the Irish bourgeoisie would support an anti-imperialist struggle. This is the inevitable result of a movement for national liberation which became not only non-socialist, but anti-socialist. The Irish bourgeoisie was never firm in its struggle against imperialism (from the beginning its financial affairs were controlled from London). In recent years it is clear that it has given up the unequal fight, and is content to occupy the position of junior partner in the Imperialist market. The Anglo-Irish free trade agreement will mean complete free trade with Britain by 1975; the application to join the E.E.C. is yet another example of how the S. Irish bourgeoisie has abandoned the nationalist aims of the independence movement, in an attempt to gain a place in the sun.

For these reasons it is probably correct for Communists to campaign on an anti-imperialist basis, particularly in as much as this exposes the false nationalism of the bourgeoisie. However any attempt to make this the main element of policy and propaganda in S. Ireland would almost certainly be overtaken by events, and become diversionary.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

In some ways the situation the North is clearer (4). It has been an important industrial centre since the 19th century, and its productive forces have developed to a considerably higher level than they have in the South [Tables 2,3,4]. It may be argued that in comparison with the UK as a whole Northern Ireland is industrially underdeveloped. In terms of production, and of per capital GDP, this is true. However this underdevelopment is perfectly consistent with the *regional depression* caused by Northern Ireland's position on the fringes of a large monopoly market (compare Scotland, Cornwall, S. Italy). The *level* of industrialisation (90% of the working population are employed in non-agricultural concerns) is not consistent with colonial status. Similarly, it can not be said that there are survivals of pre-capitalist social relations: the class structure of Northern Ireland, with a proletariat of over 80%, is an accurate reflection of the class structure of the UK as a whole [Table 3].

In both Northern and Southern Ireland the bourgeois democratic revolution has *in essence* been carried out. That is not to say that there are not anomalies and gross injustices to be found both sides of the border, and particularly in the north. It is not the level of *democracy* which determines whether or not the bourgeois democratic revolution has been carried out (consider for example the USA), but whether it is the State of the *bourgeoisie*, which favours and encourages the development of capitalism. This was not true of China in 1940; it is true of both Northern and Southern Ireland.

## A SOURCE OF CONFUSION—THE TWO TYPES OF COLONY

It is important to understand how it is that the term 'colony' has come to be applied so carelessly to Northern Ireland. To an extent this must be due to a lack of clarity on the precise meaning of the term colony: its most general meaning, in the context of the anti-imperialist struggle is the one outlined above. However there is another and distinct significance which can be given to the term. On this question the *Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies*, presented at the 6th Congress of the Comintern in 1928, is very helpful:

"In regard to the colonial countries it is necessary to distinguish between those colonies of the capitalist countries which have served them as colonising regions for their surplus population, and which in this way have become a continuation of the capitalist system (Australia, Canada, etc.) and those colonies which are exploited by the imperialists primarily as markets for their commodities, as sources of raw material and as spheres for the export of capital. This distinction has not only an historic but also a great economic and political significance."

For the sake of convenience I shall refer to these two types of colony as 'Emigrant' colonies and 'Exploited' colonies.

This distinction is a very valuable one; it is clear that the two types of colony belong (in general) to different historical epochs. The emigrant colony is the colony of early and expanding capitalism (Australia, USA and to an extent the Spanish and Portuguese colonies of S. America); in most cases any national contradiction between such colonies and the metropolis was resolved during the period of the bourgeois democratic revolutions in Europe. With a few exceptions (India) the exploited colony belongs to the era of imperialism (the 'grab for Africa', etc.), and the struggle of such colonies for liberation is part of the world anti-imperialist and socialist struggle.

### THE ENGLISH CONQUEST OF IRELAND

From the 12th century onwards the English feudal state made several attempts to conquer Ireland. This period of conquest is dealt with by Jackson in *Ireland Her Own* (5). In general this was part of the process of assimilating the national minorities of the British Isles into an enlarged British State (6). To the extent that, certainly in the eighteenth century, the English pursued deliberate policies to keep Ireland in a state of underdevelopment, it is probably correct to describe Ireland as 'England's first colony'.

Only in Ireland was there a national minority large enough to resist the English attempts at assimilation. It was partly in order to overcome this resistance that the 'Ulster Plantations' of the 17th century were instituted. The plantations were made up largely of Lowland Scots; they brought to Ireland a new bourgeois democratic political outlook, which expressed itself ideologically as Presbyterianism. Significantly they established (not without prolonged struggle) a new form of land tenure (The Ulster Custom), which was bourgeois democratic in essence as opposed to the feudal relations which predominated throughout the rest of Ireland (7).

Thus in Ireland, certainly by the 18th century we can see the development of two types of colony; the Protestant areas of the north were an Emigrant colony whose cultural and social links were with Britain. In the South there was a semi-feudal society, administered by an Anglo-Irish ascendancy in the interests of the metropolis. The fact that the Protestant North was *historically* a 'colony' of the emigrant type is a possible source of the idea that Northern Ireland is a 'colony' and therefore by implication that the struggle in the North at the present time is a struggle for national liberation. The basis of such an analysis must be that Northern Ireland is an 'exploited' colony—hence the importance given to figures illustrating the depressed nature of the NI economy and that there is a significant *national* contradiction between the population of Northern Ireland *as a whole* and the UK state. In this case there is no clarity on the position of the Protestant working class in the North: it is implied that they would support the struggle for national liberation if they were not so ideologically backward etc..... This in general is the line of the Official IRA and the 'C'P. (see 'Ireland, a communist view', CPGB 1971 & Greaves in *Ireland Her Own*.) (Alternatively, it is argued, by the Provisionals and certain Trotskyist groups, that the Protestant working class forms part of the 'Unionist Monolith', and as a 'privileged stratum' they are objectively counter-revolutionary. It is argued that the Protestant working class must be faced with a "strong, united Irish working class, with the small farmers and the other anti-imperialist forces behind them". (my emphasis) (Purdie, *Ireland Unfree*—IMG 1972, p.68).

This argument seeks to equate the Protestant community of the north, which "reproduces..... the class structure of the metropolis", with the white minority *ruling classes* of Southern Africa.

### THE RESOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL CONTRADICTIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The two lines outlined above are the two major lines which have emerged on the Irish question. It is important to see that neither of them, for all their 'political' divergence, attempts to make a scientific analysis of the position of the Northern Protestants. To do this it is necessary to analyse historically the development of the Protestant community. It will be seen that neither do the Protestants constitute a population of 'colons' whose class interests are those of the British bourgeoisie, nor is there a *national* contradiction between them and the UK. That is not to say that there was never a national contradiction, but consistent with their historical status as 'emigrant' colonists

this contradiction was resolved, to a large degree, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, that is in 'the period of bourgeois democratic revolutions in Europe'.

In the North the *conditions* for capitalist development existed in the late 18th century. Their further development was hindered by British regulations restricting industry and, particularly, trade (the Navigation Acts). The whole question of the (bourgeois) revolutionary movement in Ireland between 1778 and 1801 needs further study and discussion. In general however certain factors are clear:-

1. The driving force of the movement was Ulster. Both the Volunteers and the United Irishmen originated in Belfast (Jackson p.105/6 and p.116).
2. The ideology of the movement was in general bourgeois democratic. There is a very close connection between the aims of the 'Volunteers' and the aims of the American Revolution; and both of these movements can be characterised as the attempt of an emigrant colony to throw off the shackles imposed by the metropolis.
3. Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen, whose ideological basis was the French Revolution, took the struggle to a higher stage by winning the support of the 'men of no property'. This made possible an alliance of the two communities in Ireland, and the United Irishmen can be characterised as a national democratic movement to establish a united Ireland:

"To unite the whole people of Ireland.....and to substitute the common name of *Irishmen* in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter...."

The United Irishmen were defeated by the Irish administration and the British state; if they had succeeded in their aims they would have created the One Irish Nation based on an alliance between the bourgeois democratic North and the southern peasants. The consequences of this failure are of utmost importance for the further development of Ireland. In the first place the United Irishmen marks the last time that the Northern Protestant community expressed any significant national contradiction between themselves and Britain. This has been explained (by Jackson for instance) as the result of (a) the general decline of revolutionary consciousness in Europe, (b) the counter-revolutionary influence of the reactionary forces in the North (*Ireland Her Own*, p.200). While these factors may have had some effect, to argue that they were the sole cause of the more or less permanent 'fading away of the North' is to argue that social consciousness determines social being. Subjective factors alone cannot explain the Protestants' hostility to Irish unity for the past 150 years.

The fact is that while the United Irishmen were brutally suppressed and the democratic aims for which they were fighting were not fulfilled, the concrete conditions which gave rise to the bourgeois democratic movement in the North altered and the material contradictions between the Northern colonists and Britain were resolved. As a result of the concessions won by Grattan's 'revolution', and more particularly the Act of Union in 1801, there were no further restrictions on Irish manufacture and trade. The nascent capitalist class in the North tended more and more to identify their interests with the development of the imperial market and the material basis for a nationalist movement in the North disappeared. It is important in this respect to be quite clear that although the United Irishmen was a broad based democratic movement, *in essence it was a bourgeois movement*; its ideology and specific demands closely mirror those of the French (bourgeois) Revolution:- the Rights of Man, universal suffrage, and the "will and power to be happy to pursue the common weal as the individual pursues his private welfare, and to stand in insulated independence, an imperial people" (9).

### THE ACT OF UNION AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

There were two main results of the Act of Union. In the South, those industries which had been development at the end of the 18th century (mainly textiles) went into rapid decline since they were no longer protected by the tariff barriers erected in 1783. This decline and the demands of the peasantry for land reform formed the basis of the Southern Irish nationalist movement. It is important not to make this movement a 'logical' successor to the United Irishmen. Both have to be related to their specific conditions, and these specific conditions were different.

In the North there was a general growth of industry, based largely on linen and shipbuilding. Large scale capitalist development took place and Northern Ireland shared in the Industrial Revolution. This is not consistent with colonial exploitation, under which conditions the reverse is generally true (as in India and the South of Ireland) (10). The extent to which the economy of Northern Ireland was during the nineteenth century *integrated* with that of the UK as a whole is

described by speaker 'Y' for Ireland at the Second Congress of the Communist International (11). He also describes the effect (both positive and negative) of this on the consciousness of the Protestant workers:-

"The majority of the population of this section (Northern Ireland) are *anti-nationalist* and antagonistic to the rest of the country. While this is in itself a complication, the *class issue* is clearer cut. The fact that Ulster is the industrial centre of Ireland, *that the nationalist issue is subordinated, and that it considers itself an integral part of the British Empire makes the problem similar to that presented by any large industrial centre in England.*" (my emphasis). It should be noted that this was written *before* partition.

The essential point being made is that the uneven development of the two parts of Ireland had created a situation in the industrialised North where the major contradictions were not national contradictions but class contradictions. If this analysis is correct it would be interesting to see how the traditional Marxist view is to be proved wrong and the resolution of class contradictions is to be seen as a prelude to resolving the major national contradiction.

It is probably necessary to consider briefly the suggestion that because the industrial development of Northern Ireland was financed by British capitalists it is in some sense invalidated. The question of the development of capitalism is a highly complicated subject. However a few general points can be made:

1. Capitalism cannot be legislated into existence nor will massive financial resources alone establish a capitalist system. Also needed are the objective social conditions—fairly well-developed small commodity production, a potential proletariat, etc.—which will allow capitalism to develop. That these conditions existed in Northern Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century is made clear by Connolly, (*Labour in Irish History*, p.70).
2. It is not unusual for developing capitalist economies to be financed from outside sources. For instance US heavy industry was largely financed by Britain (12). This is not used as an argument to suggest that US capitalism is not indigenous, or that a colonial relationship existed between Britain and the USA in the nineteenth century.
3. Specifically in the case of Northern Ireland, care must be taken not to invent national contradictions which do not exist. 'English' capital—mostly from London—presumably financed the development of the Glasgow shipyards, the South Wales coalfield and the Yorkshire steel industry; this would not be regarded as strange. Why should it be so for the Belfast shipyards?

### HISTORICAL IDEALISM

The *implication* of the line of argument that gives particular significance to the fact that it was *English* capital which financed the Belfast shipyards is that Northern Ireland was in some sense a plot on the part of British imperialism. This comes dangerously close to a liberal and idealist approach to historical development. It is perhaps unfortunate that English communists tend to have guilt feelings about Ireland and are anxious to demonstrate their anti-imperialist fervour; this may lead them to mistake wishes for reality. It is undoubtedly 'a shame' that the United Irishmen failed, it is undoubtedly true that British Colonialism and then imperialism has exploited the Irish people and caused untold suffering; that the British ruling class has exploited differences among the people to maintain its class dictatorship; that the Orange Order is a corrupt and reactionary organisation. All of this is beyond dispute, but the subjective desire to sweep away all this rottenness is, in fact, 'to ignore history' and to assume a Utopian attitude which will be of no service to the heroic struggles of the Irish people.

More specifically, *moral* considerations are not relevant to the national and colonial question. This was pointed out quite clearly by Lenin when combatting Rosa Luxemburg's erroneous views on the National Question. Referring to the secession of Norway from Sweden, she argues that the actions of the Norwegians in desiring 'to have a king of their own for their money.....' invalidates the whole national movement which 'had absolutely nothing in common with revolution'. To this point Lenin replied:

"Undoubtedly, in wishing to have a king of their own for their money and in rejecting, in a national referendum, the proposal to establish a republic, the Norwegian petty bourgeoisie displayed exceedingly bad philistine qualities...But what has all this to do with the case?" (*The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* [Moscow] p.68/9).

It must be stressed that to say that Northern Ireland is basically part of the UK is not to defend British imperialism. The British ruling class has pursued a consistent policy of oppression and exploitation in Ireland. The point at issue is—'what is the nature of that oppression now in Northern Ireland?' There is some confusion in the fact that 'British Imperialism' is both the *class* exploiter of the British proletariat and the *national* exploiter of colonial and neo-colonial countries. Although there is an obvious relation between these two forms of exploitation, and although the exploiting class is the same in both cases, the distinction between national and class oppression is not just a semantic distinction. It determines the tactics and strategy of the struggle to be waged. In the case of Northern Ireland the principal contradiction is a *class* contradiction, not a *national* contradiction. To raise the banner of national liberation is not only diversionary but it would prove ultimately disastrous for working-class unity.

In general the attitude and policies of British imperialism in the twentieth century have been such as to keep the whole of Ireland as a part of the British market. To do this they did *not* deliberately divide Ireland—in fact this division has now become an embarrassment to them.

In his account of the Treaty negotiations (*Peace by Ordeal*) Lord Longford (13) makes it quite clear that the dominant group in the British ruling class had no intention of dividing Ireland:

".....both sides were agreed on the ideal solution—severance of Ulster from the United Kingdom and incorporation in a united Ireland—but neither side.....could move towards this consummation without a third party's consent". (p.91).

This account, although incorrigibly bourgeois/liberal, is the only detailed account of the Treaty negotiations and would appear to be factually correct. This is not to say that the British ruling class had a democratic or even altruistic interest in Irish affairs. Their principal aim was to satisfy Irish national aspirations by granting some kind of formal independence to the whole of Ireland, while retaining economic, military and if possible political domination. (This is the significance of the 'Government of Ireland Act' which was an attempt to do just that but which failed because of the British ruling class's failure to understand the objective differences between the situation in the North and the South). The failure of both the Southern Irish and the British government to establish a united Ireland was due partly to their disagreement over the extent to which independence was to be granted, and partly to the refusal of the Ulster Protestants to be incorporated into any kind of United Ireland.

Although the tactics of the British ruling class changed to meet the needs of a situation which they did not create, the basic premises remained the same. The general tendency during the 50 years of Irish independence has been for the Republic to be re-assimilated into the British market and sphere of influence. Before the growth of the civil rights movement in the North there were signs that this tendency would be marked by some kind of rapprochement between the North and the South (O'Neillism). Exponents of the One Nation Theory should be clear as to what they mean by this since at the present juncture a 'United Ireland' would probably mean reunification under British control, thus formally marking the failure of the Irish National Movement.

### CONCLUSION

The basic argument outlined above is that Northern Ireland is *not* a colony but is *essentially* a part of the British nation state. That is not to minimise the importance of the sectarian divisions and discrimination in Northern Ireland, nor is it to deny the fact that ideological survivals which are nationalist in form play a significant role in maintaining those divisions. However as Communists we do not believe that a section of the working class can be objectively reactionary (14); the fact that this ideology has had a strong hold on the working class in Northern Ireland is as much a result of the theoretical and practical weakness of the communist movement as of the strength of the British ruling class.

It is certain that there are many people who will not accept this thesis. Rather than repeat the arguments yet again, it might be more constructive if they were to direct their attention to five specific questions:

1. Is the term colony a more or less precise term which defines an economic and political relationship between an oppressed nation and its oppressor?
2. If so, in what sense is Northern Ireland a colony? It does not appear to have any of the character-

- istics normally associated with colonies, and outlined in the CPGB pamphlet quoted above.
3. If N. Ireland is not a colony—and since by definition it cannot be a neo-colony—what is its national status other than an integrated part of the British nation state?
  4. Is it true that the Protestant population of the North have consistently expressed their wishes to remain part of the United Kingdom? If so how is this consistent with colonial oppression?
  5. Why should the wishes of the Protestant population be ignored on the National Question?

E.K.

## NOTES

(1) For instance the CPGB in their pamphlet *Ireland—A Communist View* (1971) state: "Northern Ireland is a British Colony....." and go on to argue that the main harm this has done is the election of Ulster Unionists "who.....regard themselves as Tories." (It is worth noting here the CP's reasons for ending partition, which reflect exactly the concerns of the 'progressive' section of the ruling class: If partition ended it would ".....get rid of nine Tories from Westminster.....save the keep of the troops in Ireland, and these youngsters would not get hurt.....Save up to £200 million a year spent subsidising the economy of Northern Ireland. The age old quarrel between Britain and Ireland would be over. *Ireland as a whole, already Britain's second biggest customer..... could well become a profitable first.*")

The CPBML, while less openly pro-imperialist, take a similar line (see for example the *Worker* (1/10/72) quoted in *MLQ* 3 p.25).

(2) The Trotskyist groups do not appear to characterise Northern Ireland as a colony. They do however speak of an "anti-imperialist" and "national liberation" struggle. (IMG: *Ireland Unfree* by Bob Purdie—the 'foreword' by Gerry Lawless states that the struggle in Northern Ireland has "transcended the civil rights stage and has become a struggle for national liberation", and see p.59. IS: see the *Gombeen Republic* by John Palmer, *International Socialism* 51, p. 17. These groups do not see this 'national liberation' struggle as a *stage* in the struggle for socialism but as in some sense identical with it. Quite apart from the theoretical difficulties of this approach, and the lack of any Leninist precedent, they do not explain in *practical terms* how this anti-imperialist, *national* struggle is to be integrated into an all-Ireland struggle for socialism, they ignore the existence of state structures, they do not identify the class forces which would support an anti-imperialist struggle under the leadership of the working class. In fact Palmer in the article referred to above shows, quite correctly, how the Southern Bourgeoisie is totally dependent on British imperialism: ".....imperialism cannot be defeated in Ireland without the overthrow of the rule of Irish capital". In other words Southern Ireland is in the same position as any other small capitalist country (eg Belgium), and it is socialist rather than nationalist struggle which is on the agenda.

(3) *The Colonial Question: A Study Syllabus for Workers* CPGB (1930s).

(4) It will be noted that point (c) of the CPGB pamphlet is not discussed here. Firstly because it is not a crucial determining factor (see section: 'What is a Colony?'), secondly because any argument on this point depends solely on our overall analysis. Either Northern Ireland is a colony and therefore "the state machine.....is controlled by a foreign power", or it is a part of the United Kingdom, in which case it is not.

(5) T.A. Jackson *Ireland Her Own*, pp 36-90. This is a useful historical account but care should be taken with much of the analysis and conclusions, particularly in the 'Epilogue' by Desmond Greaves.

(6) See Thomson: *From Marx to Mao Tse Tung*, pp 53 fol.

(7) On the question of Ulster Custom and its importance for the development of Capitalism, see the ICOs pamphlet *The Economics of Partition*, pp 7-23 and 40-45 (2nd Ed.) This is the most useful work of the (now) B&ICO. For a brief characterisation of the pro-imperialist nature of their line, see *MLQ* 3, p.27.

(8) Two main arguments are used: one is over the ownership of industry in Northern Ireland the other is over wages. On the first point see *MLQ* 3, p.26 and Note.

The question of wage levels is also much more the result of the economic pressures of a monopoly market than of colonial oppression of Northern Ireland. According to official figures (*Ulster Yearbook and Britain: an official Handbook*) the average weekly earnings of all industrial manual workers in Northern Ireland is £24 (1969/70); for Britain as a whole the figure is (£26 (1972). This difference reflects the difference in wage levels throughout the country (eg. in East Anglia 52% of all adult male workers earn less than £25 (gross) per 50 hour week, in Greater London the proportion is only 27.7%).

(9) Secret Manifesto, quoted by Connolly, *Labour in Irish History*, (*Labour in Ireland*, p.74).

(10) Marx: *Project for Discussion on the Irish Question*.

The fantastic decline he outlines after the act of union is based entirely on examples taken from the South.

(11) For a fuller quotation and further discussion on this point see D.B.'s article 'Northern Ireland: The Nature of the Struggle', *MLQ* 3, p.23.

(12) Marx: *Capital*, Vol. 1, Moscow 1965, p. 765.

The point is taken up by Lenin: *The Right of Nations to Self Determination*, Moscow, 1971, p.43, who argues that the economic dependence of small (or large) capitalist states on the power of the "imperialist finance capital of the "rich" bourgeois countries.....has nothing whatever to do with the question of national movements and the national state."

(13) Lord Longford (Frank Pakenham) *Peace By Ordeal*, Mentor edition.

It need hardly be stressed that this is a thoroughly bourgeois account. But apart from being a sentimental 'personality' history it is based on a large amount of documentary evidence and is interesting as presenting a very clear bourgeois/liberal line on the Irish question.

(14) A frequent answer to this is that the Protestants are ideologically reactionary and that therefore Communists should not support their national demands. The basis of this argument is the Leninist position that the Right of Nations to Self Determination is not an *abstract* right which Communists must support in all circumstances: there are progressive national movements and reactionary ones.

However there is a neat jump in this argument. There is no question of *supporting* a Protestant national movement since no such movement exists. It is a question of recognising that, whether we like it or not, the national question has in general been decided in Ireland. As Communists we should be the last to "make a fetish of the national question" and support petty-bourgeois nationalism of whatever kind. This is not to say that we do not support the demand of the Catholics for civil rights or recognise that Unionism/Orangeism has imbued the Protestant working class with a reactionary and sectarian ideology. The point at issue is whether we oppose this ideology because it is anti-national or because it is anti-working class. The reactionary ideology of other national communities—even when it takes a specifically racist or sectarian form, such as social chauvinism or Nazism, does not lead us to deny the *national* status of those communities.

## TABLES

### 1. Trade

#### Northern Ireland

No separate trading figures are published for Northern Ireland. However estimates can be made:

Imports (1969) £728m = £470 per capita  
Exports (1969) £669m = £440 per capita

Of total imports in 1968 74% came from or via GB  
9% came from Southern Ireland

Of total exports in 1968 87% went to or through GB  
6% went to Southern Ireland

#### Southern Ireland

Imports (1969) £495m = £166 per capita  
Exports (1969) £330m = £110 per capita

Country of origin of imports (1968) UK 51% (rising, at least to 1970)  
USA 7%

Country of destination for exports (1968) UK 69% (falling)  
USA 10%

Share of exports that are 1. Agricultural — 45% (falling) (1969)  
2. Manufactures — 55% (rising)

### 2. Occupations

	N Ireland	S Ireland
Total working population	591,000 (1971)	1,066,000 (1970) *
No. employed in agriculture	54,000 (9%)	291,000 (27%) — falling
No. Unemployed	45,251 (1971)	80,000 (1972)

### 3. Classes

	N Ireland (1961)	S Ireland (1966)
Total number of 'occupied persons'	602,300	1,118,000
EMPLOYEES	72.8%	62.8%
UNEMPLOYED (Registered)	9.4%	4.7%

SELF-EMPLOYED	10.9%	30.2% *
EMPLOYERS	6.9%	2.4%
(those employing more than 25)	2.2%	

\* of whom 81% are accounted for by agriculture

#### 4. Gross National Product

##### A. Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has no separate trading figures and so it is impossible to calculate a separate GNP. It is however possible to quantify the GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

Total GDP (1969)	£747m
Percentage contribution of agriculture	8.6%
Per capital GDP	£490 (compared with £395 for the South)

##### B. Southern Ireland

Total GNP (1969)	£1444m
Percentage contribution of agriculture	17% (1959 = 24.8%)
Per capital GNP	£507 (UK = £840; EEC = £950)

Sources:

*Statistical Abstract of Ireland 1969*  
*Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1971*  
*Digest of Statistics, 1972*  
*Ulster Year Book, 1971*  
*The Economist—Annual Supplement on Ireland, 1971*

# Women's Liberation: Critical notes on Selma James' pamphlet

THE W.L. MOVEMENT has been in existence now for about five years. Many different factors brought women together: some left the various 'left' organisations because of the 'male chauvinist' attitudes existing in these groups (1), some women were encouraged by the 1968 strike of the Ford women (2), others were influenced by the movement in the United States, others for personal reasons. All of these women organised in separate groups discussing various problems, various specific 'women' issues. These issues went from pure 'consciousness-raising' (3) discussions to more elaborate discussions about the theory of women's oppression.

All through these years the movement was concerned with specific problems which tended more and more to bring into question the economic, cultural and social basis of the bourgeois system. For example, the women involved in the Contraception and Abortion Campaign, who were primarily concerned with 'individual' cases of abortion, began to understand, through struggle, that this question is linked to the way in which the bourgeois system works and cannot be solved on an individual basis. At the same time, the movement retained its basically *spontaneous* nature. All work was directed towards four immediate issues, and little or no attempt had been made to work out long term perspectives or a programmatic basis for the movement as a whole (4).

### "Women, the Unions and Work"

It was at this stage in the development of the women's movement that a paper entitled "Women, the Unions and Work" (5) was written by Selma James of the Notting Hill Women's Liberation Workshop. This was first presented at the National Conference of Women on March 25-26 1972.

This paper is important insofar as it tackles a vital issue for the WL movement: that of the unions and work for the working woman. It also represents a possible turning point in the movement, that of providing an organisational platform for feminism. It must be noted that Selma James does have some kind of 'revolutionary' perspective: she argues that women, in general, represent the most oppressed 'class' in this society and therefore the most progressive force in the 'working-class' movement, *regardless of their relationship to the means of production*. Since the existing working class organisations are predominantly male-dominated, she argues that women, again in general, must organise separately "where they work, for wages, where they shop, where they live and work..." (p. 17).

The paper is also important for its analysis, for the problems it raises and the demands it makes.

### The Analysis

It is clear that Selma and her group view 'men' as the main enemy. The paper mentions capitalism and its oppression of the working class, but the emphasis is definitely put on the 'sex-battle'. Selma James is right when she says that bourgeois society is male dominated and male orientated, that union officials are mostly men, even though women represent some 40% of the labour force, that 'left' organisations are male dominated and most of them have a male domineering attitude and mentality, etc.....

This is not to be denied. But it is totally wrong to explain these phenomena in terms of Male/Female antagonism. To do so is to argue that abstract human nature exists and that men are by *nature* antagonistic/superior/patronising, etc. towards women. This is in contradiction to the Marxist view that attitudes and ideologies ('human nature') are socially determined. The emphasis



must be placed on the *class* struggle of exploiters and exploited, and the effect which bourgeois ideology (as part of that struggle) has on men and women alike (6).

One must be clear that women do not form a 'class' of their own, in the same way as the blacks in the United States are not a class (a parallel often made by Selma James). If one talks about women's oppression one must be careful to stress that this oppression is at different degrees depending on the social class specific women belong to. The wife of a Managing Director is not oppressed in the same way or to anything like the same degree as a working class woman.

### The Problems

Selma James sees two main problems for the Women's Movement, the first is the capitalist machine itself, ready to incorporate more and more women because of the increasing need for cheap labour (p.2). The second one, more insidious, and it is implied, more dangerous, are the left organisations who understand the need for the co-operation of women within the class struggle but who consider them as backward and therefore use them only marginally: "They effectively want to make us auxiliary to the 'general' struggle." (p.2). And this is so because: "for them the 'real' working class is (white), male and over thirty". Therefore male chauvinism is deeply rooted even among those who speak for the working class and in its interests. They talk the language of men, always forgetting that women are part of the working force.

In general there is much truth in these characterisations. As we shall see later, however, the (feminist) solutions proposed are totally incorrect. Specifically in relation to the first point, this is perfectly true. However it is idealist to suppose that you can fight capitalism from 'without' (p.2), for fear of more enslavement of women. The only way to fight capitalism and destroy it is from within, from the ranks of the working class movement, where men and women unite together to fight the common enemy, capitalism, and its oppressive system, the bourgeois ruling class and its state.

### Selma James and the Unions

Selma James attacks the Unions for many reasons:

"They do not help the struggle of women for equal pay, in fact they have helped to maintain unequal rates of pay".

"They worry that 'equal pay' might disturb wage differentials among men".

"They are not much concerned with unionising women (p.5) eg the Night Cleaners".

"They are not interested in women who do not work".

"The Unions work hand in hand with the capitalist classes (p.6), for they have convinced workers that if they.....(get) a rise in pay they.....(get) a rise in standard of living."

All of these questions must be tackled separately, but one thing is clear at the outset: Selma James' confusion over the unions. She does not know precisely what a union is nor its role and limitations in the fight against the capitalist system; she sees no difference between the leadership and the rank and file.

Moreover, she confuses political and economic struggles.

1. She asserts the treachery of the Unions in that they have "helped to maintain unequal rates of pay". In fact this problem is far more complex than that—one need only consider the NUT which has obtained equal pay for women. Does this make it a progressive union? The example of the NUT underlines the fact that wage differentials, insofar as they are the result of Union policy (7), are caused by the relative strength and economic bargaining power of groups of workers, not by their sex. The fact is of course that many women are employed in menial, unorganised and low-paid industries. The question of why this is so is one which we must examine, but the question of wage differentials, although more acute in the case of women (for the reason outlined) is only part of the general problem of the low-paid worker.
2. (A related point) She stresses the grading in pay and the concern felt by men over equal pay for women. Again this is the wrong way of looking at the problem. The capitalist system has always played men against women and grading is an expression of this. There can be little doubt that the trade unions are now essentially bourgeois structures which disseminate basically bourgeois ideology. Whereas there was an economic basis for the bourgeois ideology of male superiority (see note 6), this is becoming increasingly irrelevant. However the survival of this ideology is in the interests of the capitalist class in the same way as it is in the interests of that class for the

working class to be divided on the basis of race or (as in Northern Ireland) religion.

3. The Unions' lack of concern to unionise women—inasmuch as it exists—is very much connected with the question of rates of pay (point 1 above). If the unions *are* unwilling to unionise women it is not so much because they are women as because they tend to work in positions of low organisation and solidarity. In general the unions are reluctant to organise such groups of workers, whatever their sex. It must also be said that despite the masculine bias in the unions, their policy is increasingly orientated towards women, since women represent a large percentage of the working class.
4. In criticising the unions' lack of interest in the wageless, Selma James is again turning a general characteristic into one which is directed specifically against women. In addition it shows a lack of clarity concerning the role of the unions. Unions are, by their very nature, concerned with working people, and thinking that they should take care of the wageless is beside the point, since the problems of 'wageless' people (ie housewives) are different from those of wage earners.
5. The attack on the class-collaborationist nature of the unions, while it starts from a correct understanding, is developed on completely mistaken lines. One of the main aims of the working class is to gain a higher standard of living through economic struggle (strikes), with the help of the union organisation. The more the working class strikes the more it threatens the capitalist system, the more it recoups its standard of living. If inflation 'follows' the rise in wages, as the capitalists want us to believe, this does not mean that economic struggle is useless and the working class is being deceived. It is an inevitable process under capitalism which lives on profits made on the backs and sweat of the workers. If workers want a greater share of the wealth they produce the capitalist class, because of the way the system works, must inflate prices. This does not mean that economic struggles are useless. On the contrary they are very important and necessary: capitalism is forced to make greater concessions and overall it becomes clearer to workers that economic struggle is not an end in itself but a tool to help in the destruction of capitalism. Economic struggle in itself will not bring down capitalism; it must be developed into political struggle and action. That is to say that unions, the organisations of the working class uniting in order to gain and defend certain rights, can be seen only in the context of economic struggles. Workers, organised in unions, can only deal repeated blows to the capitalist system and bourgeois state; the final blow to destroy them must be a political one, which only a political party can provide.

When speaking of unions we must be careful to distinguish between the so-called leadership and the rank-and-file. The militancy is to be expected at rank and file level, not at the leadership level: union leaders, by their very position, will tend to be 'co-opted' into the bourgeois state, and in this way to betray the long-term interests of their class (eg Lord Cooper). Workers have more need of the organisation and what it can provide than of the men at the top.

### The Six Demands

We shall now consider Selma James' six demands. They are as follows:-

1. We demand the right to work less (for starts a 24 hour week)
2. We demand a guaranteed income for women and men, working or not working, married or not; we demand wages for housework
3. We demand control of our bodies. We demand the right to have or not to have children
4. We demand equal pay for all
5. We demand an end to price rises
6. We demand free community controlled nurseries and child care

#### Demand No. 1

It is a wrong demand. At a time when a correct demand is contained in the campaign for the 'right to work', this demand can only be confusing, or at worst reactionary. At the present time the capitalist class would be only too pleased to grant such a demand, as it is expressed. Even if we were to demand the right to work less it must be accompanied by the demand for the same pay. In addition the proposed 24 hour week is totally unrealistic and will not attract people or make them organise. Some people (eg the car workers) are demanding a 35 hour week, a realistic demand which can be organised round and fought for. Besides, one must point out that *work* in itself is not bad. Selma James is considering work as something which exists on its own, and not something, the characteristics of which are determined by social conditions. Under socialism work will still exist and be more necessary than ever, but it will be satisfactory because the relationship

between the 'workers' and work will be basically different.

#### Demand No. 2

Asking for wages for housework is a completely mistaken and reactionary demand. It is in contradiction with the main idea of the WL movement, which is to get women together in order to break the mental, cultural and psychological isolation of women. Through working women have been breaking this isolation. At the factory or in the office women find other women with the same problems as themselves.

Such a demand not only contradicts this basic idea but is also reactionary. Institutionalising individual housework (by introducing wages) would make women more enslaved and more isolated from social production. In some circumstances it would even be of great benefit to the capitalist system.

As Marxist-Leninists we hold that women should be involved in social (not individual) production, should mix with other women, and with men, join their unions and involve themselves in struggles as a first step towards economic independence. This will assist in the development of political consciousness. It is high time that women stopped thinking (as this society makes them think) that 'politics is a business for men'. Politics is everybody's business. Women should join men in economic struggles in the same way as men should join women in economic struggles. The bourgeois ideology of men superior/women inferior must be defeated through the joint attacks of women and men. This ideology will be defeated only when men fully understand that the revolution will not be possible without women, and for that they (the men) must be educated. Only then will it be possible to set up a true revolutionary party.

#### Demand No. 3 (control of our bodies)

It is on the whole a correct demand. It would be better phrased as free contraception and free abortion on demand. In addition a true progressive demand would be sex education for both women and men during adolescence and free contraception.

#### Demand No. 4

Equal pay for all sounds nice, but it is a completely utopian demand. It negates class struggle and struggle in stages according to the specific objective conditions. According to Selma James, women do not have to fight for this demand, they just have to ask for it to be conceded. Besides, even socialist society maintains wage differentials, for very good reasons (to each according to his work.....) To raise such an egalitarian demand in capitalist society is totally meaningless and divisive. In any case what does equal pay for all mean? Should a family with one child have the same pay as a family with ten children? The only way this demand can have any meaning is if it is the long term communist aim of "to each according to his needs....." As such it is a part of our long term perspectives, but not a demand that we raise now.

#### Demand No. 5

The demand to end price rises is a good *agitational* demand; however it is not a demand aimed specifically at women—men and women must organise together against rising prices. It is important that this is done within a wider political context otherwise it might be argued that the Tory Government's 'freeze' is aimed at the same target. In capitalist society price rises cannot end since that society is based on profits. Therefore workers (women and men) must organise *politically* to destroy that society and construct a more advanced one based on the needs of the people and not the profits of the minority.

#### Demand No. 6 ('community controlled nurseries.....')

This is a good demand, but again it must be placed within a wider context. It is a good basis to get women together and organise them, but experience shows that this kind of campaign, after a militant beginning, collapses in the face of bourgeois bureaucracy. This is particularly so since this is the kind of demand which capitalist society can (*formally* at least) agree to. Nevertheless it is a vital demand and worth fighting for.

The fact that it is an isolated campaign separates women in this movement from other struggles. It must be understood that it is one aspect of a wider struggle (working-class struggle), and in the process of fighting for it there is a better understanding of the limitations imposed by capitalist society. That is why a wider (political) organisation is necessary to link all the aspects of different struggles together and to overcome the dangers of isolation.

## Conclusions

It will be noted that of the six demands, those which have some positive aspects are the same as the existing campaigns, around which the movement has been structured (see note 4). Otherwise we are faced with a collection of demands, the overriding characteristic of which is that they attempt to provide an organisational platform for feminism, based not on *class struggle* but on *sex struggle*.

Selma James shows no understanding of the continuing class struggle as it manifests itself, both structurally and ideologically, in the trade union movement. Realising that working women do not enjoy the same status as working men in this society, are not very highly organised, and have in fact two jobs (one outside and one at home), she does not attempt to analyse *why* this is so, but hits at the first obvious but superficial things; the unions and men. But you don't kill a tree by cutting it down, you must pull up the roots. What we mean by this is that the roots of low-level organisation amongst women, their unequal status and their double slavery are to be found in the answers to such questions as:

What are trade unions for women? What are their limitations?

Why are women reluctant to join trade unions?

Why do they accept this double slavery?

Why do even organised women tend to have a low political consciousness?

Through these questions the problems will present themselves more clearly to be more correctly solved.

Selma James' pamphlet advocates that women should not join unions or should leave them on the subjective grounds that they are dominated by male chauvinists. Her alternative is a female union. This is feminist and can only divide the working class along 'sex battle' lines: male unions v. female unions. This will worsen the subjective ideological problems between men and women and will *objectively* be of great help to the ruling class. It will be a diversion from the class struggle and will make it more difficult for a revolutionary party of the working class to be created.

Again we stress very strongly not only the need but the urgency for women to organise at their place of work, to unite with men in their everyday struggles against capitalism. But we do not make the common, supposedly 'left' claim that socialism will bring equality on a golden dish—a view apparently held by the CPGB and CPBML (8). We think that struggles for women to gain equality start *now*, under capitalism, for male chauvinism is not the prerogative of the ruling class. The working class has accepted many bad things from capitalism, one of them being the bourgeois ideology of male superiority. These subjective factors which are reflected in every sphere of life must be exposed *now*, must be explained to men, must be fought against, and it is vital for the development of the working class movement that men should be involved at all stages. The struggle of women is on three fronts: psychological, economic and political.

Women's Group (CFB—London)

## Notes

(1) Many women found that the 'left' organisations had the same prejudices as are found in society in general. Women are just good enough for typing stencils, preparing the coffee, etc. Very few are taken on the same level as men.

(2) The 1968 Ford Strike was the response of women at that plant to the controversial equal pay bill which was going through parliament at the time. Women machinists at Fords, Dagenham, demanded the right to operate a higher grade machine, traditionally reserved for men, and get their rate of pay. Over 1,000 women came out and soon after they were backed and supported by the men. After a tough struggle they won 97½% of the male rate, but lost the right of access to the highest paid grades. The relative success of the Ford women made many women (especially among the small existing WL groups) realise that it was possible to struggle and change things which had seemed unalterable.

(3) *Consciousness-raising* is the term generally applied by women in the WL movement to the process of discussing personal problems. Through discussion comes the realisation that they are thinking human beings with common problems. Through this raising of their consciousness as *women*, rather than sex-objects, they begin to understand their oppression and it helps them to revolt against it. It is generally the first step taken on forming or joining a WL group.

The danger of this consciousness-raising process is that some groups have tended to do just that—have closed themselves up and not opened themselves to the world and the various problems comprehended in women's oppression.

- (4) The four immediate issues were:
- Equal Pay,
  - Equal Education and Job Opportunities
  - Free 24 hour Nurseries
  - Free Contraception and Abortion on Demand

They were decided on a more or less national scale and were first fought for at the First National Demonstration (London, March 6 1971). Of these issues, only the fourth one (Contraception and Abortion) is still developing.

One of the reasons why the others have hardly taken off the ground is to be found in the fact that the WL movement is basically a spontaneous movement, with very loose central co-ordination (Women's Liberation Workshop), whose main concern is not to take general decisions to be approved or rejected by the groups, but to convey information.

- (5) *Women, the Unions and Work*, printed by Crest Press, can be obtained from the WLW, 3 Shavers Place, London W.1.

Our article discusses mainly the practical implications of S.J.'s pamphlet. There is a need for further discussion on the wider theoretical implications, for which see *Women and the Subversion of the Community* by Maria Rosa Dalla Costa (the theoretical inspiration for S.J.'s work).

- (6) The economic basis for the division between men and women is well analysed by Engels: "In the old communistic household, which embraced numerous couples and their children, the administration of the household, entrusted to the women, was just as much a public, a socially necessary industry as the providing of food by the men. The situation changed with the patriarchal family, and even more with the monogamous individual family. The administration of the household lost its public character. It was no longer the concern of society. It became a *private service*. The wife became the first domestic servant, pushed out of participation in social production." (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Section II. Marx/Engels selected works (1968) p. 509).

- (7) On this point see S.M.'s *Notes on the Labour Aristocracy*, in particular part 2 (MLQ 3).

(8) In their pamphlet—*Women in Class Struggle*, the CPBML tackle the problem from an economist standpoint, and pay no attention to the political and ideological problems involved. Their advice to women is to stick to the working class man in the struggle against the capitalist system and for socialism and all their oppression will disappear, since the basis of it is economic. Crudely speaking this may be correct but it is simplistic and incomplete, ignoring the ideological struggle which must start now, as well as the existing WL movement.

The CPGB have a more subtle line, in their pamphlet *Women, the Road to Equality and Socialism* by Rosemary Small. But their subtlety does not disguise the fact that all they are advocating is: Join the CP, vote the Tories out and bring in a new Government committed to socialist policies, etc.....i.e. again women are relegated to a subordinate role and heaven for women is to be found under (the British road to) Socialism.